

Acknowledgements

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WALKING IN PORTUGAL

40 GRADED SHORT AND MULTI-DAY WALKS INCLUDING SERRA DA ESTRELA AND PENEDA GERÊS NATIONAL PARK

by Andrew Mok and Simon Whitmarsh

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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/889/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL, United Kingdom.

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Front cover: Walking towards the summit of Poios Brancos with views of the pitchers surrounding Torre, the highest point in mainland Portugal (Walk 24)

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In some sections
there are barriers/
handrails but
others are more
intimidating.

The levada
leading to the
hydroelectric plant

signed 'Central' ('Cascata' is to the left), and go up a narrow stony path, leading to an easy footpath.

After 500m go straight over a cart track and continue for 200m before the footpath starts to go downhill. The route then starts zigzag down steeply after 200m, it is quite easy to follow but not easy to walk.

It reaches a **levada**; turn left and walk along the *levada* which then curves to the right and crosses over a bridge. Continue following the *levada* downstream with some significant drops on the right. ◀

Reach the end of the 1.5km-long *levada* at a junction of PR3 merging with PR5 and continue to follow PR3 downhill towards Castelo, along a large water pipe then across a bridge to the **hydroelectric power station**.

This was the first **hydroelectric power station** ever built in Portugal. It was constructed in 1927 and is still in use today. In 2017, hydroelectric power accounts for more than 37% of the total energy production in Portugal. The country's eventual aim is to use 100% renewable power.



Walk past the station then along the dirt track uphill, and follow the dirt track towards the castle. Arrive at tarmac road after just over 1km and turn left (downhill) to the front of the **castle**, then walk along the cobbled path to the left-hand side of the castle, waymarked yellow/red (a swimming area and restaurant are at the end of the tarmac road).

Castelo da Lousã, also known as Castelo de Arouce, once defended the routes to Coimbra. Occupied by the Moors in 1124, it was retaken, earning itself a Royal Charter in 1151.

Continue for 150 metres to a building with a disused toilet and take the path to the left of it. Go under the cable (which supplies the sanctuary shelter), then zigzag steeply downhill towards the river. Pass the first ruined watermill and cross the river via stepping-stones. Follow the footpath on the true left side of the river, walking a short distance before re-crossing the river (with a second watermill). Continue to cross and re-cross the river several times, with some more mills. On the final occasion, crossing this time from true left to the other side, arrive at the *levada* that was encountered at the beginning of the walk. Retrace steps to the start in **Lousã**.

Once back on the route, continue south. To the left is a cairn-festooned projection of rock which is not the route. After 500m, there are multiple vague paths, bear left (SE) leading to an incredibly narrow gap heading down with steps between two massive boulders known locally as ‘the eye of the needle’. It leads directly to **Nave da Mestra**.

Allow some time to explore the **Nave da Mestra** (Master’s Ship). This was a summer holiday house built in 1910, creating a small resort for shepherds and mountaineers. The structure was literally built into the ship-shaped imposing granite boulder, hence the name.

From the house, head north-east through a gap in a wall. (This footpath is very indistinct as it’s on bare rock.) Continue walking north-east to a gap in a second wall. The route curves left and then right; ignore a footpath going off to the right. With the trig point on Curral do Martins visible to the north-west, head south-east towards a gap between two stony prominences. About 40 metres before the prominences, turn left (north-east) along a path marked with cairns and very faded red/yellow waymarking. Reach a **viewpoint** just under 2km later.

The **viewpoint** boasts great views of the Zêrere valley (Walk 23), a huge deep valley sculpted from the granite by a single glacier. Manteigas is visible to the left in the distance.

The path is once again a little indistinct at this point. Zigzag down for 1km to a dirt road and turn left. This is a particularly delightful part of the walk, being gentle and mostly downhill through beautiful woodlands with streams to all sides. Reach a fork just under 2km later and take the left-hand, uppermost option.

After another 2.5km, just before a **Matas Nacionais** building (which is 50 metres from a tarmac road ahead), take the right-hand turn into a cobbled road. This



View of Manteigas from the descent

becomes a grass-covered cart track, heading quite steeply down with a wall on the right-hand side. It leads to a tarmac road after 300 metres; turn right and downhill, past an unusual chapel with a roof like a ski-jump and statue of Mary on top. Continue on the road and curve round the front of the chapel. Take the first right, an acute turn almost doubling back, onto a cobbled road downhill, which becomes a stone road. Just before its end, turn acutely left to arrive at a tarmac road. Turn left and go downhill.

The route curves past another chapel (Capela de São Domingos, built in 1616), and then turns right into a dead-end road, Rua Engenheiro Augusto Barjona de Freitas. Go down the steps on the left before the end of the road. Arrive at another road and turn left towards Colegio Nossa Senhora da Fatima, after which turn right and go down a few steps.

Go left at the next fork after 40 metres, and walk down the steps and cross a bridge. Continue down Rua das Carreiras, a cobbled road between buildings. At its end, turn acutely left just before reaching a church and an exposition hall, almost doubling back to arrive back at the start.