

WALKING IN PORTUGAL



About the Authors

Simon Whitmarsh and Andrew Mok are both keen walkers, covering over 2000km a year. They have walked extensively in Britain, doing (at least part) of all the major trails, have hiked across England twice, and have walked in most countries in Europe. More recently their addiction to mountains has increased, with treks in the US (including many parts of the Appalachian Trail), Australia, New Zealand, Andrew's native Hong Kong, Nepal (Everest Base Camp) and Pico, the highest mountain in Portugal, which is in the Azores.

They are both doctors – a consultant paediatrician and a general practitioner – who decided to write this book after being delighted and astounded by the walking opportunities of Portugal.

When not travelling, they enjoy finding new routes near their village in Snowdonia.

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Additional thanks to our friends and family for help and forbearance.

WALKING IN PORTUGAL

by Andrew Mok and Simon Whitmarsh

CICERONE

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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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Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

International Distress Signal (*emergency only*)

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter Rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward



Emergency telephone numbers

Emergency Services: tel 112

Forest Fires: tel 117

Note There is no mountain rescue service in Portugal. Health care can be expensive – be adequately insured.



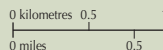
Symbols used on route maps

	route
	alternative route
	long-distance trail
	start
	finish
	start/finish point
	alternative start point
	alternative start/finish point
	woodland
	urban areas
	international border
	station/railway
	peak
	shelter
	building
	chapel/monastery/cross
	castle/fort
	bridge
	viewpoint (<i>miradouro</i>)
	windmill or turbine/tall cairn/ radio or aerial mast/lighthouse
	picnic area/beach
	waterfalls (<i>cascata</i>)
	water feature
	other feature

Relief in metres

2200–2400	
2000–2200	
1800–2000	
1600–1800	
1400–1600	
1200–1400	
1000–1200	
800–1000	
600–800	
400–600	
200–400	
0–200	

SCALE: 1:50,000



Contour lines are
drawn at 25m intervals
and highlighted at
100m intervals.

GPX files

GPX files for all routes can
be downloaded for free at
www.cicerone.co.uk/889/GPX

A typical inland landscape of southern Portugal with rock roses, lavender, and a profusion of wildflowers



PREFACE

Our first experience of walking in Portugal came during a year of European travelling, when we were captivated by the unexpectedly huge mountains, devoid of crowds, and numerous excellent walking trails. Finding out where these began or went proved to be challenging, with limited resources from the majority of tourist information offices, poor outdated maps and no guidebook in English. The solution was to do extensive research and write our own guide.

We do not pretend to have walked every single footpath in Portugal but have investigated hundreds: asking locals, going online, making enquiries at the national park,

nature park and tourist information offices, poring over maps, or simply spotting the signs as we went along. From these hundreds we have walked more than a hundred, from which we have selected walks that made our hearts sing, our spirits lift and made us feel glad to be alive. This is of course entirely subjective. Wherever possible we have chosen walks along the 'old ways' (routes used by villagers in ancient times as their sole means of passage), sections of long-distance GR trails, and incorporating some history.

This book is designed to complement the Cicerone guide *Walking in the Algarve*, and has a different selection of Algarvian routes.

Simon Whitmarsh and Andrew Mok

2017

View of the town from Marvão's castle, São Mamede (Walk 31)



INTRODUCTION



Why go walking in Portugal? This delightful country enchanted two self-confessed walking addicts so much that after just a short visit we were captivated, returning again and again. There are so many reasons to fall in love with this relatively undiscovered gem of a country. The diverse terrain includes the rugged north with a multitude of mountains, many higher than Ben Nevis, and the beautiful Douro valley. Further south, the Serra da Estrela mountain range provides alpine, snow-capped peaks and plateaux. There is nearly 1000km of coastline including the dramatic arid scenery of the southern coastal areas, bordered by wave-pummelled cliffs.

All this is encapsulated in a narrow strip of the Iberian Peninsula.

Another reason is the weather. With such a variety of meteorological microclimates within its borders, there is always somewhere to enjoy hiking at any time of the year in Portugal. The Arrábida Nature Park is good for walking in winter, as is the Algarve, whereas in the heights of summer when it is too hot to enjoy a good walk in many parts of Europe, you will find balmy temperatures in Serra da Estrela Nature Park.

The major draw remains the space. This is not a large country compared to its more massive Iberian neighbour, but you will be able to

walk in peace and tranquillity, very likely in the delights of just your own company. Even if its popularity as a walking destination were to increase over time, this is a place that could absorb many visitors. In addition, there are the warm and friendly people. For those who don't speak Portuguese, some effort plus sign-language will be rewarded with smiles and helpfulness.

And then there are the wildlife and flowers. The hillsides carpeted with fragrant blooms in spring, or the almond blossom of late winter lying like snow on the ground are truly a sight to behold. Should you wish to be surrounded by trees, Portugal is the world's largest cork producer and has widespread arboriculture. The birdwatching is phenomenal with a plethora of resident raptors, and uncountable millions of migratory birds. You may even be lucky enough to spot an Iberian wolf in Peneda-Gerês National Park, or a previously extinct lynx in Guadiana Nature Reserve.

These selected walks take you on a 175 million-year journey through time. From fossilised dinosaur footprints in Arrábida (Walk 28), via megalithic sites around Monsaraz (Walk 33), and the Roman roads from Portugal all the way to Spain (Walk 9), to the deserted schist villages that are now undergoing a resurgence, becoming superb bases for outdoor activities (Walk 17). Allow some time on your visit to see why UNESCO has

decided that Portugal deserves to be the proud home of a dozen World Heritage Sites.

The food and drink is another understated attraction, with the unsung hero being the desserts and the *doces conventuais* (convent sweets). The good, heavy rich red wines from the Douro or Tejo valleys could compete with those of Bordeaux, but as their best are not often exported, you will have to come here to sample them. The same applies to the crisp *vinho verde* from Minho.

This is just a taste of our experiences after walking more than 6000km over a period of three years. Enjoy these favourite routes in Portugal. *Boa viagem!*

ABOUT PORTUGAL

To many people, the country's best-known region may be the Algarve, but there's a whole lot more to Portugal – especially for the walker. There are mountains upon mountains, and huge amounts of space, nature and solitude. Portugal has a population density only a quarter of England's, so even though it is a smaller country there is much more space.

Adding further to the under-crowding is that most Portuguese do not walk for leisure. One local explained that 'during the dictatorship, we all had to walk. Now that we don't, why should we?' Often when the Portuguese do walk they do so in big groups of up to 400 at a time, as



Panoramic view of Manteigas and the Zêzere glacial valley (Walk 23) with Penhas Douradas above (Walk 21)

a pilgrimage, a short walk with a long lunch, or a torch-lit night walk.

This is a relatively undeveloped country in some ways – where else in Europe would you expect to find people washing clothes by hand in communal *lavadouros* – yet surprisingly ahead of its time in others. It is astonishingly green in terms of energy production and usage, with 63% of all energy used in 2014 being from renewable sources: mainly wind turbines (as seen on Walk 26) and hydro-electric (Walk 17).

In Portugal, high places are often punctuated with radio aerial masts and accessible by road, so don't expect pristine summits apart from on top of Carris (Walk 7) and the Montesinho peaks (Walk 12). Other summits are graced with beautiful chapels, such as São João da Fraga

(Walk 6), Monte Farinha (Walk 13) and Peninha (Walk 27), or with castles such as Castro Laboreiro (Walk 2) and Marvão (Walk 31).

Freshwater swimming is another particular delight in Portugal; a *praia fluvial* is a freshwater beach, either on a riverbank or on the shores of a reservoir. There are opportunities on Walks 7, 8, 9, 17 and 29.

GEOLOGY

The geology of Portugal cannot be covered in full here, but to put it in a nutshell, Portugal has three main geological areas: north, central and southern. The north is essentially a stack of five layers raised when the Iberian plate collided with the Meguma Terrane plate 410 million years ago. This collision formed the mountains

WALK 1

Caminho dos Mortos, Real

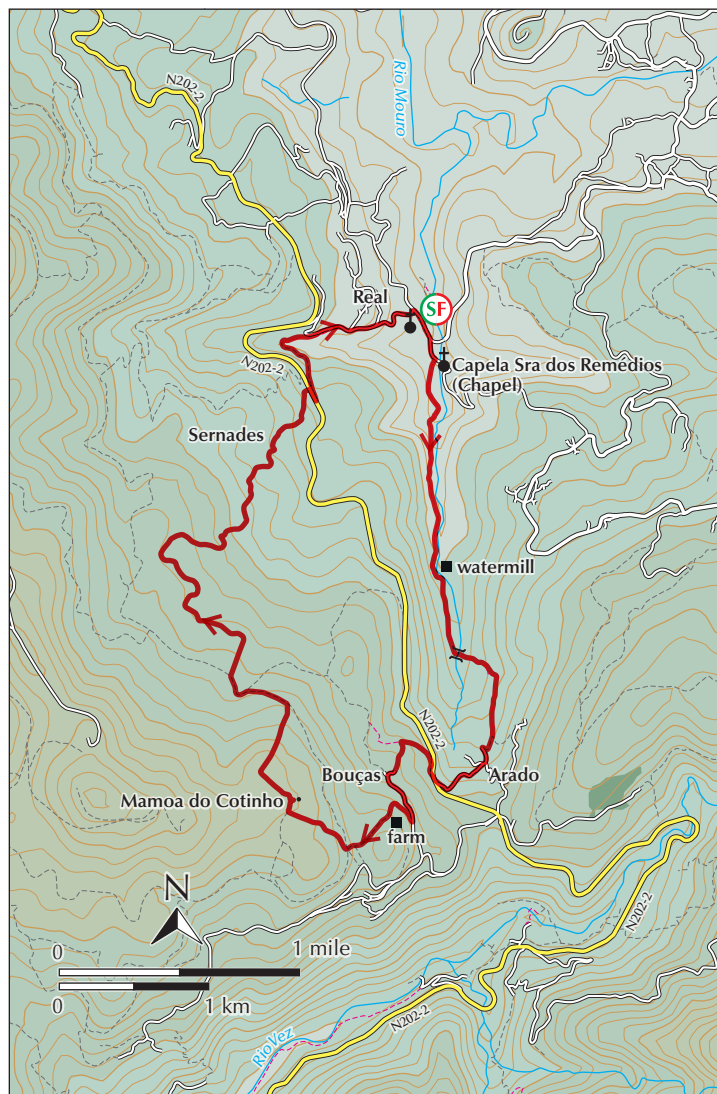
Start/Finish	Capela do Senhor dos Passos, near Real (N42°00.658' W08°22.938')
Distance	12.5km
Total ascent	650m
Grade	Medium
Time	5hrs
Terrain	Mostly along old ways, uneven in places, a little bit of tarmac
Map	Adventure Maps Peneda-Gerês; Carta Militar 1:50,000 sheets 1-1 and 1-2, 1:25,000 sheets 3 and 8
Access	On the M503-1 between Merufe and Tangil
Parking	At start
Warning	Caution is required after heavy rain as the route crosses a number of streams, and in many places the water rushes along the <i>calçada</i> (stone-built pavement).

Caminho dos Mortos – ‘Walk of the dead’ – is a superb route despite its macabre origins. It follows the old ways, along which the dead used to be transported in ox-drawn carts to church for burial: if you look closely the ruts from the cart wheels are still visible. There is also a Neolithic burial mound now almost subsumed into the landscape.

The route goes through beautiful countryside, a couple of small villages, and in many places follows watercourses. Short enough to be completed before the heat becomes too oppressive, and incorporating a reasonable amount of shade, this is a walk that could be done in summer.

From the chapel walk south on the tarmac road downhill. Take the very first right-hand fork, and then by a small chapel/shrine (**Capela Sra dos Remédios**) turn right to walk on a *calçada*, which is the actual ‘way of the dead’.

Walk upwards, over a solid stone bridge made of gigantic granite slabs, and past a beautiful old **watermill**,



covered in moss. ► Shortly after the mill, the path, which has been next to the river, turns to the right (where there is also a turning to the left with amazing stepping-stones).

Follow the path and 10mins later cross over the river on a **bridge** made from huge granite blocks. Then ford a stream and 15mins later walk underneath vines in the outskirts of the village of **Arado**.

The *enforcado* method of training vines at a height is commonly found in northern Portugal. It helps prevent fungal disease by raising the vines way above the fungal spores on the ground, which otherwise would get splashed onto the leaves by rainfall. The smallholders can also grow vegetables beneath them, an efficient use of space.

Reach a tarmac road and turn left, uphill, and then go straight over a crossroads to leave the village, heading up and south-west. Walk up the path, turn right at the large tarmac road, and then turn left in 50 metres. Go straight over a dirt road crossroads, then 350 metres after the tarmac road take a left-hand turn onto a cart track signposted for Bouças, with views of hand-built terracing down the Vale do Sucrasto.

In spring, this whole valley is green with ferns and moss.

Hand-built terracing still in use, with views down the Vale do Sucrasto



Once in the village of **Bouças**, turn left and then left again, staying on the tarmac road, and exit the village. After 250 metres is an acute right-hand turn: a cart track going uphill and nearly doubling backwards. Take this, and 200 metres along it take a left-hand footpath going uphill. Walk through the woods, along a path that is indistinct in places, to a **farm** where there is a fork. Go right, along a cart track, ignore a turning to the left and reach a T-junction. Turn right uphill, which is almost straight ahead.

Stay on this main dirt road until you reach a multi-way junction, then take the second right, counting anti-clockwise, going uphill through the woods. Reach a crossroads with another cart track and turn right, signed Mamoa. After 70 metres there is a very indistinct footpath on the right signed to **Mamoa do Cotinho**, a large doughnut-shaped pile covered in trees.

Mamoa de Cotinho is a tumulus built around 4000BC, a collective funerary monument and a place of worship. The name means breast, and the dimple at the top shows that the structure was hollow and has now collapsed.

After exploration, retrace steps and continue down the rough, quite wide path, going straight over two crossroads with cart tracks. Some 15mins after the Mamoa, at the next crossroads, with a major dirt road (and excellent views of the valley ahead), turn left.

After 500 metres, turn right at a crossroads. Cross over a stream and take an easy-to-miss tiny footpath on the right-hand side, and then go right at the next crossroads. This footpath becomes a cart track. When the route straight ahead is so overgrown it can hardly be seen, turn left downhill, which is following the main track.

About 15mins later, at the bottom of this track, is a low wall and a T-junction with another cart track; go left here. Then at a T-junction with yet another cart track, go right. At the next T-junction go left downhill, which leads to a village called **Sernades** (also spelled Çernades). The



route underfoot goes from cobbles to tarmac, with vines *enforcado* overhead.

At a T-junction in the village turn left along Caminho do Paço, and then immediately fork right downhill. Reach a T-junction and go right, again downhill. Arrive at a tarmac road, turn right and then take the first left onto a cart track adjacent to terracing and vines, just before the road loops back to Sernades. This leads to another T-junction with a cart track; go right, down the valley to a quiet tarmac road, and turn right downhill. At the end of this is a T-junction with another tarmac road; turn right, and 5mins later return to the start.

Capela do Senhor dos Passos, the start and finish point of Caminho dos Mortos