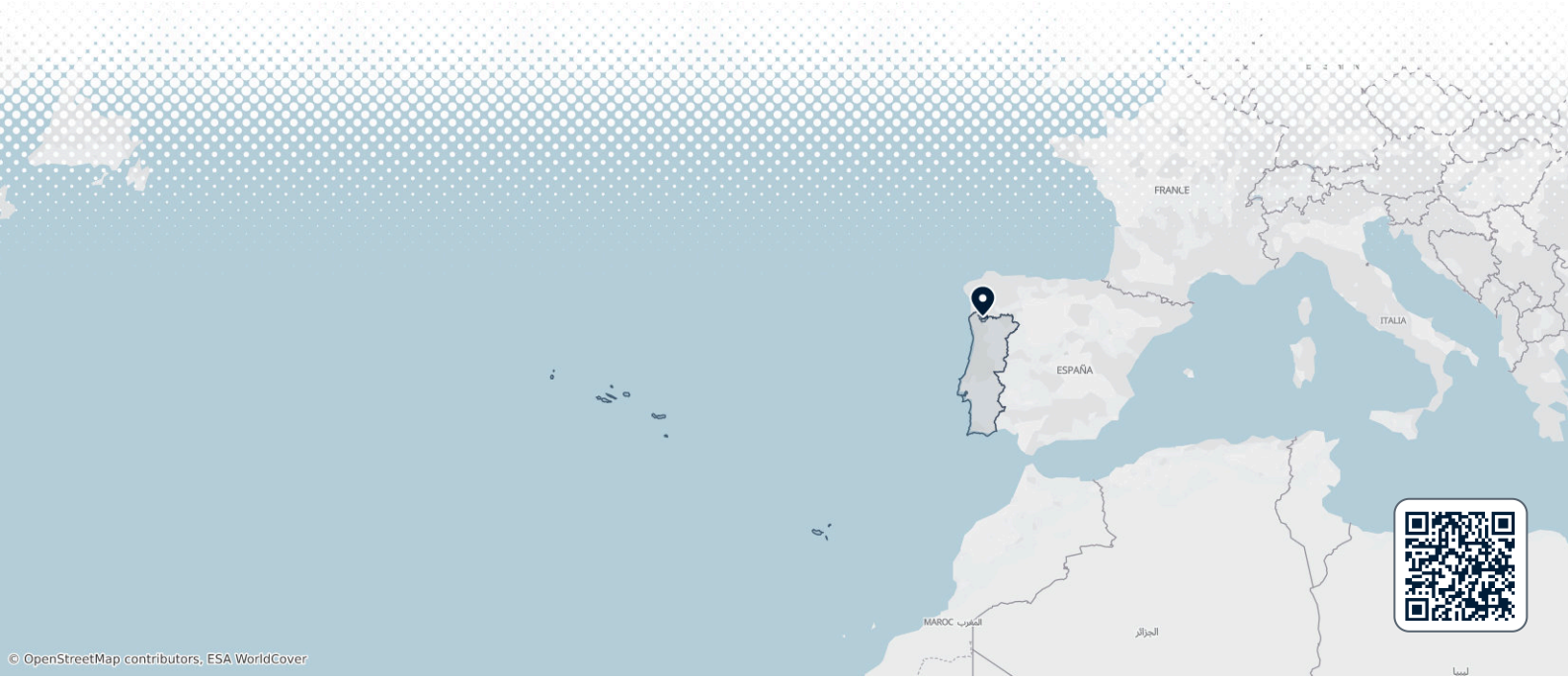


Peneda-Gerês National Park

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Peneda-Gerês is Portugal's only national park. It covers granite mountains, river valleys, forests and high plateaus in the far north of the country, along the Spanish border. Waterfalls, old stone villages and hiking trails are the main reasons to come.

The park is large and split into several areas. The Gerês side in the south has forests, reservoirs and a spa village. Soajo and Lindoso in the west have traditional stone granaries. Peneda and Castro Laboreiro in the north and Pitões das Júnias in the east are quieter and higher. A trip suits walkers, nature lovers and slow travelers, and it works best with a car.

When to visit

Late spring and early summer are the best time for walking. Rivers and waterfalls are full and the hills are green. September and October are also good, and autumn colors are strong from mid-September to mid-November.

July and August are hot and dry on the lower slopes. Wildfire risk is highest then. Winter is wet, and snow is possible on the high plateaus.

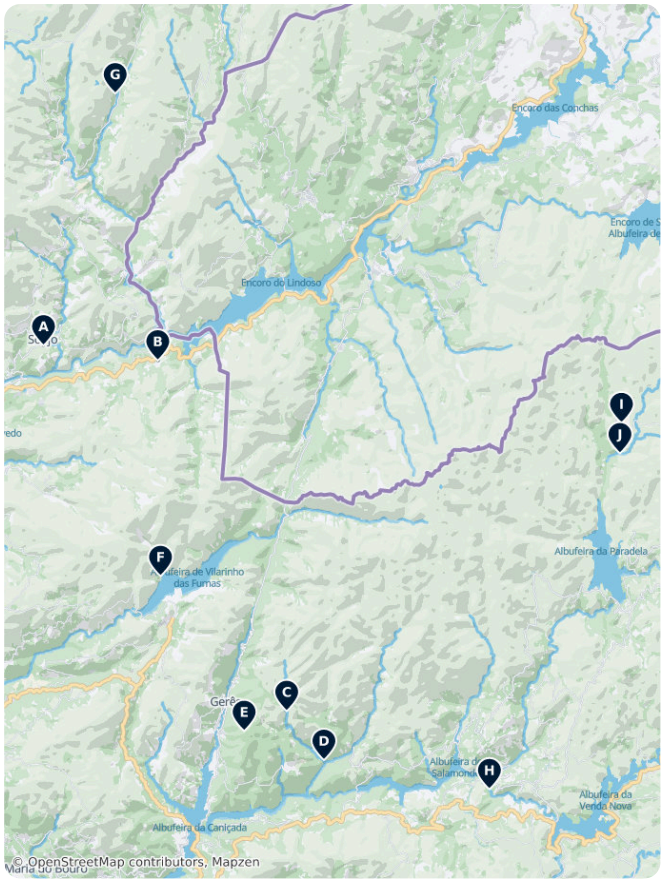
The climate data below is for a mid-altitude point. The highest areas are cooler and wetter.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	10° / 14°	3° / -3°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for hiking	11° / 17°	3° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for hiking	14° / 20°	4° / -1°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for hiking	16° / 23°	6° / 2°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 27°	8° / 4°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 33°	11° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
July	Great Great for wildlife watching	28° / 36°	13° / 9°	22 sunny days · Dry air · Calm winds
August	Great Great for wildlife watching	29° / 37°	14° / 10°	23 sunny days · Dry air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 33°	12° / 8°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 28°	9° / 5°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for hiking	13° / 19°	6° / 0°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for hiking	11° / 14°	4° / -2°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, June, July, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Espigueiros e Eira Comunitária do Soajo is a village known for its granite granaries on stilts. They dry and store corn, and many have crosses on the roof. Nearby, B Espigueiros do Lindoso has more granaries below a 13th-century castle.
- C Cascata do Arado is a waterfall in the Gerês part of the park, reached by a narrow road of about 30 minutes from Vila do Gerês, followed by a short walk.
- D Cascatas de Fecha de Barjas is a group of waterfalls on the southern side of the park.
- E Miradouro da Pedra Bela is a viewpoint in the Gerês part of the park.
- F Vilarinho das Furnas is the site of a village flooded when a dam was built. The old houses appear above the water when the reservoir level is low.
- G Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Peneda is a sanctuary in the Peneda valley, in the north of the park. A steep stone stairway climbs to it from the village below.
- H Ponte da Misarela is a medieval stone bridge with one arch over the Rabagão River. Local legend says the Devil built it.
- I Mosteiro de Santa Maria das Júnias is a 12th-century monastery near the high village of Pitões das Júnias. A waterfall viewpoint, J Miradouro da Cascata de Pitões das Júnias, is close by.

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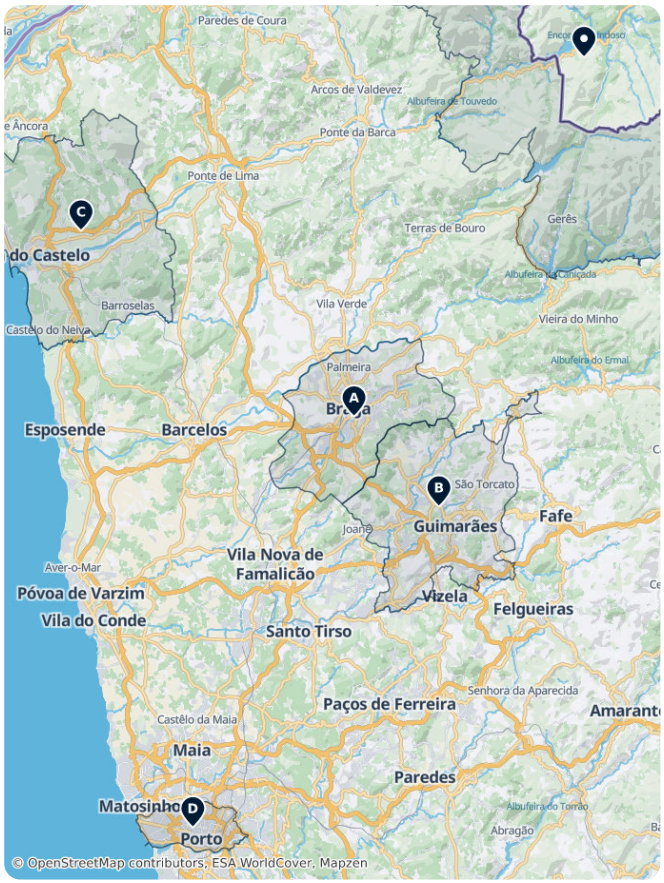
What to experience

- Walk the Roman road in the Mata da Albergaria forest and look for the old stone milestones. Cars pay a fee in summer and cannot stop inside, so park outside and walk.
- Look for the stone wolf traps, called fojos, along trails. One example is Fojo do Lobo da Ermida.
- Take a spa treatment at Termas do Gerês in Vila do Gerês.
- Hike the shepherd trail from Branda da Aveleira to the Peneda sanctuary. It is about 11 km.

Day trips

The park itself needs several days, and its areas are far apart. These places work well on a day out from Vila do Gerês. Times are by car.

- A Braga is about 50 minutes away. It is a large city with a historic center and major churches.
- B Guimarães is about 1 hour away. It has a well-preserved medieval center.
- Ponte da Barca is about 1 hour 10 minutes away, on the western edge of the park. It is a small river town and a useful base for Soajo and Lindoso.
- Ponte de Lima is about 1 hour 15 minutes away. It is a town on the Lima River.
- C Viana do Castelo is about 1 hour 25 minutes away, on the Atlantic coast.
- D Porto is about 1 hour 25 minutes away and is the main arrival city.



Where to explore

- For nearby cities, see Braga, Guimarães and Porto.
- For the Atlantic coast to the west, see Viana do Castelo.
- On the southern edge of the park, see Vieira do Minho.
- For the wider region, see Braga District.
- Other protected areas in the north and center are Arouca Geopark and Serra da Estrela Nature Park.

Getting there

- By air: Porto airport (OPO) is the main gateway. The drive from Porto to Vila do Gerês is about 1 hour 25 minutes.
- By train: Trains run from Porto to Braga, which is the usual rail base for Gerês. No train goes into the park. Book at CP Comboios de Portugal.
- By bus: Express coaches connect Braga with Arcos de Valdevez, a town near the western side of the park. A regional bus runs from Braga to Vila do Gerês. It is infrequent, especially on weekends and off season. Check the last bus back before you go.
- No direct bus runs from Porto to Gerês. You change in Braga.

Getting around

- Public transport inside the park is limited. Regional buses reach main villages, but they do not connect most sights. Timetables are at Cávado regional transport. Soajo and Lindoso have very few buses, so check before you plan a day there.
- A car gives the most freedom. Distances between park areas are long. For example, Vila do Gerês to Soajo is about 1 hour 10 minutes by car.
- Without a car, stay in Vila do Gerês and use local taxis and walking for the nearby waterfalls and viewpoints. There is no ride-hailing inside the park.
- Walking: the park has over 300 trails, from short walks to mountain climbs. The long GR 50 route covers about 190 km. Some areas need a permit or guide, and temporary closures happen. Write to pnpg@icnf.pt for current restrictions.

Driving

- A car is the best way to see the whole park. Roads are narrow and winding, and driving times are long.
- In the Mata da Albergaria, you cannot stop or park inside. Park at Portela do Homem and walk. Cars pay a small fee in summer.
- Parking along some forest roads is banned, including the road from Leonte to Portela do Homem and the road along the Homem river and Vilarinho das Furnas reservoir.
- Driving on closed or restricted forest roads is prohibited. Off-road driving is not allowed in most zones.

Food & drink

Food here is simple and based on the mountains. Look for smoked meats and sausages from villages such as Pitões das Júnias, and for beef from local Barrosã cattle. Vinho verde, the young white wine of the north, is the usual drink.

Vila do Gerês and the larger villages around the park have restaurants and cafés. In small hill villages, eat at the local tavern or café, and check hours before you walk to a remote village.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Safety & health

The main risks in the park come from the mountains, weather and fire.

- Fire: July and August are the highest risk. On days of very high or maximum fire danger, cooking with fire in rural areas is banned. Open fires are not allowed in the park without authorization. Check fire danger and park closures before you go.
- Camping: camping and overnight stays outside designated sites are prohibited in the national park. Stay at an official campsite or a guesthouse. Camping, campfires and pets are not allowed in the Mata da Albergaria.
- Heat and water: summer afternoons are hot on open slopes. Carry water and start early. Rivers and reservoirs can have cold water and strong currents, so be careful when swimming.
- Weather: rain and fog can arrive fast on the high plateaus. Wear sturdy shoes and bring layers.
- Wildlife: wolves live in the park but are rare. Semi-wild garrano horses graze near farm tracks. Keep your distance from animals. Cattle and semi-wild horses graze near paths; keep your distance and keep dogs on a lead.
- Navigation: download offline maps before you walk. Tell someone your route. Mobile signal is weak in many valleys and on the plateaus.
- Emergency: call 112.

History

The park was created in 1971 and is Portugal's only national park.

A Roman road once linked Braga with Astorga in Spain. Parts of it survive in the Mata da Albergaria, with old milestones along the path. The stone bridge at Ponte da Misarela dates from the Middle Ages. The monastery at Mosteiro de Santa Maria das Júnias dates from the 12th century. At Castro Laboreiro, the castle was an early frontier stronghold. Castelo de Castro Laboreiro is now a ruin.

Mountain villages shaped the land with shared pastures and granaries. In 1972, the village of Vilarinho da Furna was flooded when the dam was built, and its last resident had left in 1971. Today the ruins are visible when water is low at Vilarinho das Furnas.

The park and the Spanish Xurés area together form a UNESCO transboundary biosphere reserve.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



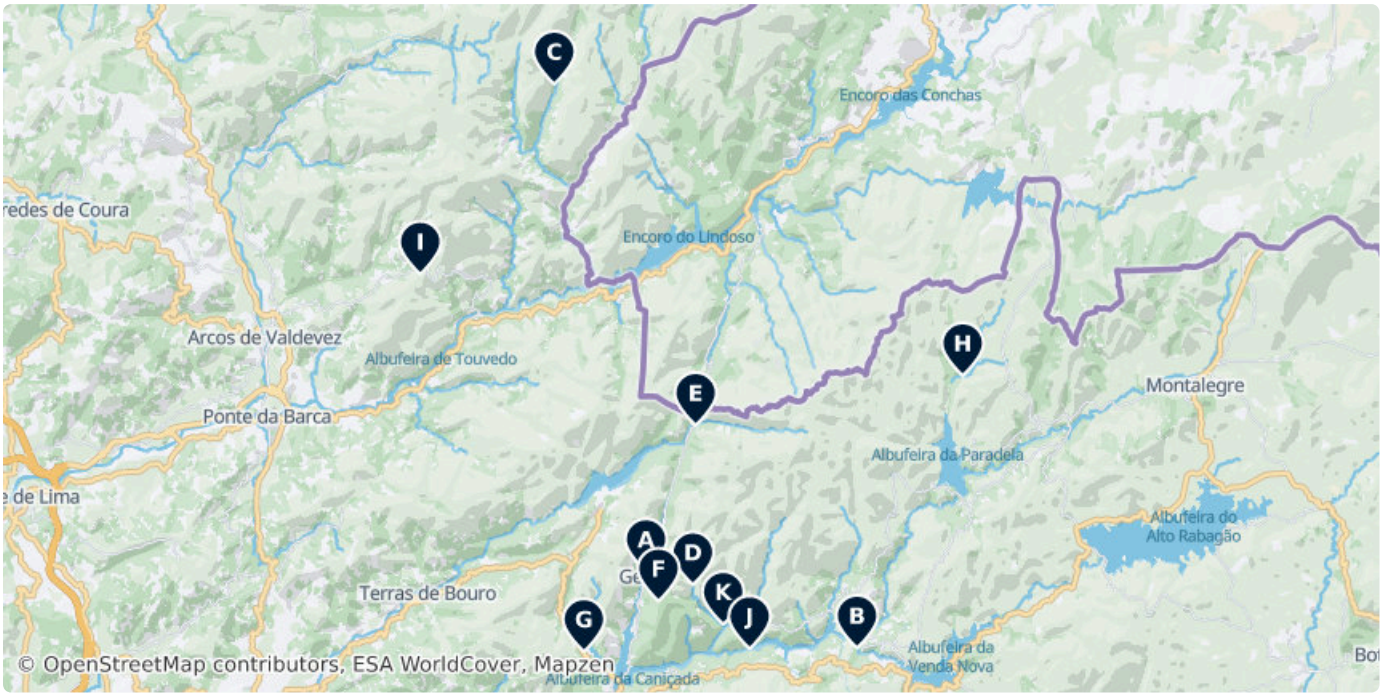
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Peneda-Gerês National Park: The Absolute Essentials

Portugal's only national park encompasses 70,000 hectares of granite peaks, oak forests, and traditional villages. This selection highlights the park's diverse landscape, from the Roman remains of the Geira road to high-altitude waterfalls like Arado and Tahiti. It includes significant religious sites such as the Santuário da Peneda and provides access to panoramic viewpoints like Pedra Bela, overlooking the Cávado River and deep glacial valleys.





A Peneda-Gerês National Park

This park set in a deep valley between two high sierras is Portugal's only national park.

Rua Engenheiro José Lagrifa Mendes, 4845, Portugal (41.73033, -8.16147)

visitportugal.com/en/NR/exeres/848B4..., +351 213 507 900



B Ponte da Misarela

Medieval stone bridge spanning the Rabagão River, historically known as the 'Devil's Bridge' due to local folklore.

5470, Portugal (41.69200, -8.01951)



C Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Peneda

18th-century sanctuary featuring a monumental staircase lined with 20 chapels illustrating the life of Christ, built against a steep granite cliff.

(Unnamed Road), Peneda 4970, Portugal (41.97445, -8.22316)



D Cascata do Arado

High-altitude waterfall on the Arado River accessible via a stone path and staircase leading to a dedicated observation point.

4845, Portugal (41.72379, -8.12987)

E Cascata da Portela do Homem

Located near the Spanish border, this waterfall features deep natural pools and sits adjacent to the ancient Roman road, Via Nova.

(Unnamed Road), 4840, Portugal (41.80365, -8.12808)



F Miradouro da Pedra Bela

Situated at 800 meters elevation, this viewpoint provides a wide panorama of the Gerês valley, the Cávado River, and the Caniçada reservoir.

4845, Portugal (41.71565, -8.15302)

G Basílica de São Bento da Porta Aberta

Significant pilgrimage site and basilica dating back to the 17th century, known for its location overlooking the Cávado River.

118 Estrada Nacional 304, 4845, Portugal (41.69023, -8.20319)

H Miradouro da Cascata de Pitões das Júnias (topo)

Observation deck overlooking a 30-meter drop and the nearby ruins of the 12th-century Cistercian Monastery of Santa Maria das Júnias.

(41.82853, -7.94849)

I Mamoa do Mezio 6

Neolithic burial mound and megalithic monument dating back to the 3rd or 4th millennium BC, part of the Mezio archaeological complex.

(41.87945, -8.31328)

J Salamonde Dam

Salamonde Dam is a concrete arch dam on the Cávado River, where the river forms the border line between the districts of Braga and Vila...

N103-4, 4850, Portugal (41.69167, -8.09175)



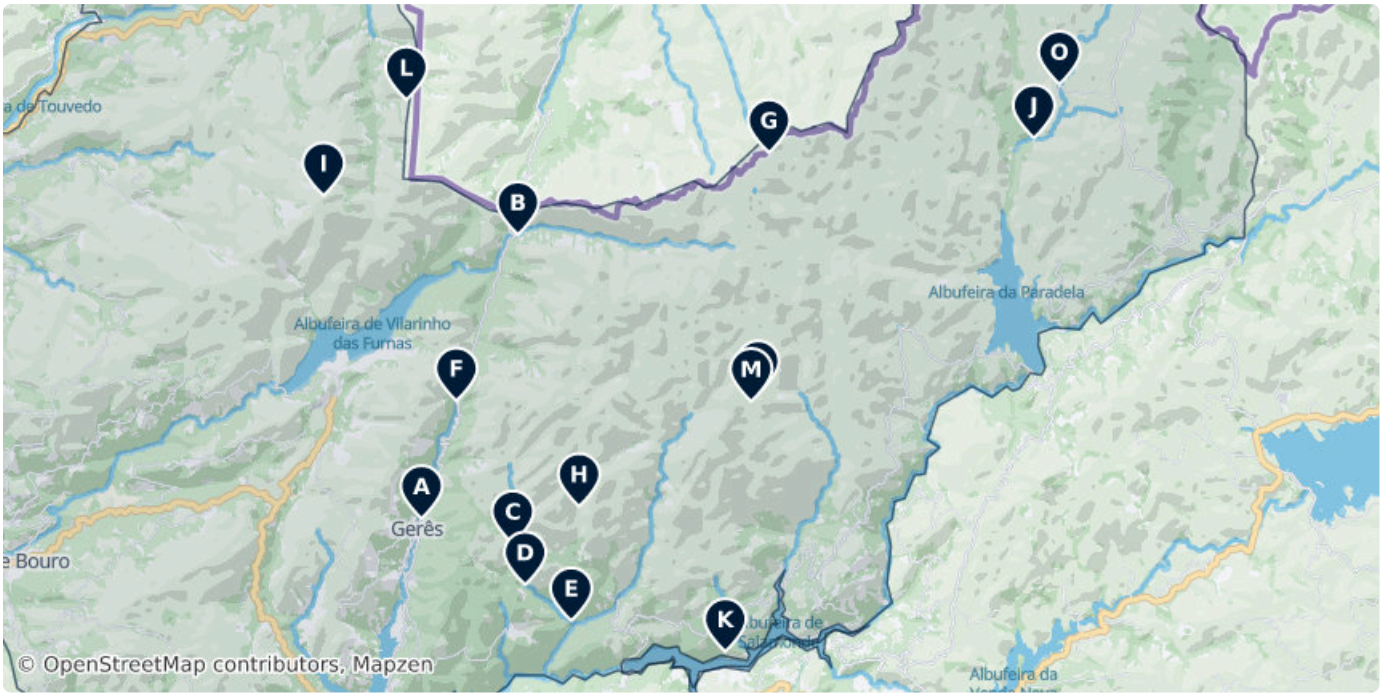
K Fecha de Barjas waterfall

Also known as Tahiti Falls, these multi-level cascades on the Arado River offer natural swimming pools accessible via a steep trail.

(Unnamed Road), 4845, Portugal (41.70390, -8.10957)

Portugal's Natural Wonders

Peneda-Gerês National Park, Portugal's only national park, spans the northwestern border with Spain. The landscape is defined by granite peaks like Pico da Nevosa, reaching 1,546 meters, and the Serra Amarela range. This protected area features deep valleys, ancient oak forests, and numerous cascades including the Tahiti and Arado waterfalls. It preserves a unique ecosystem home to Iberian wolves and Garrano ponies, alongside Roman remains and traditional stone villages.





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B Cascata da Portela do Homem

Waterfall located near the Spanish border and the historic Roman Geira road.

(Unnamed Road), 4840, Portugal (41.80365, -8.12808)



C Cascata do Arado

A multi-tiered waterfall situated at 900 meters elevation on the Arado River, accessible via a stone staircase near the village of Ermida.

4845, Portugal (41.72379, -8.12987)

D Cascata da Rajada

Waterfall located near the village of Ermida, accessible via the PR14 hiking trail.

(41.71319, -8.12557)



E Fecha de Barjas waterfall

Also known as the Tahiti Waterfalls, these cascades are formed by the Arado River near Caldas do Gerês.

(Unnamed Road), 4845, Portugal (41.70390, -8.10957)

F Cascata de Leonte

A 20-meter high waterfall located near the Portela de Leonte mountain pass.

N308-1, 4845, Portugal (41.76074, -8.14939)

G Pico da Nevosa

The highest peak in the Serra do Gerês and the second highest in mainland Portugal, reaching 1,546 meters on the Spanish border.

5470, Portugal (41.82485, -8.04107)

valentim.org/cume/1



H Poço Azul

A natural emerald-green lagoon located in the heart of the Gerês mountains, accessible only by foot.

(41.73346, -8.10687)



I Louriça

The highest point of the Serra Amarela mountain range, standing at 1,361 meters.

4980, Portugal (41.81376, -8.19547)

valentim.org/cume/5

J Cascata de Pitões das Júnias

A waterfall with a 30-meter drop located near the ruins of the 12th-century Santa Maria das Júnias Monastery.

(41.82862, -7.94919)

K Albufeira de Salamonde

A reservoir on the Cávado River created by the Salamonde Dam, used for hydroelectric power.

5470, Portugal (41.69589, -8.05620)

L Site of Community Importance Serras da Peneda e Gerês

A protected nature reserve encompassing the Peneda, Soajo, Amarela, and Gerês mountain ranges.

4980, Portugal (41.83849, -8.16678)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx

M Lagoa Pequena

A small high-altitude mountain lake located in the Serra do Gerês.

(41.76062, -8.04721)

N Lago Marinho

A high-altitude lake situated in the central area of the Gerês mountain range.

(41.76258, -8.04476)

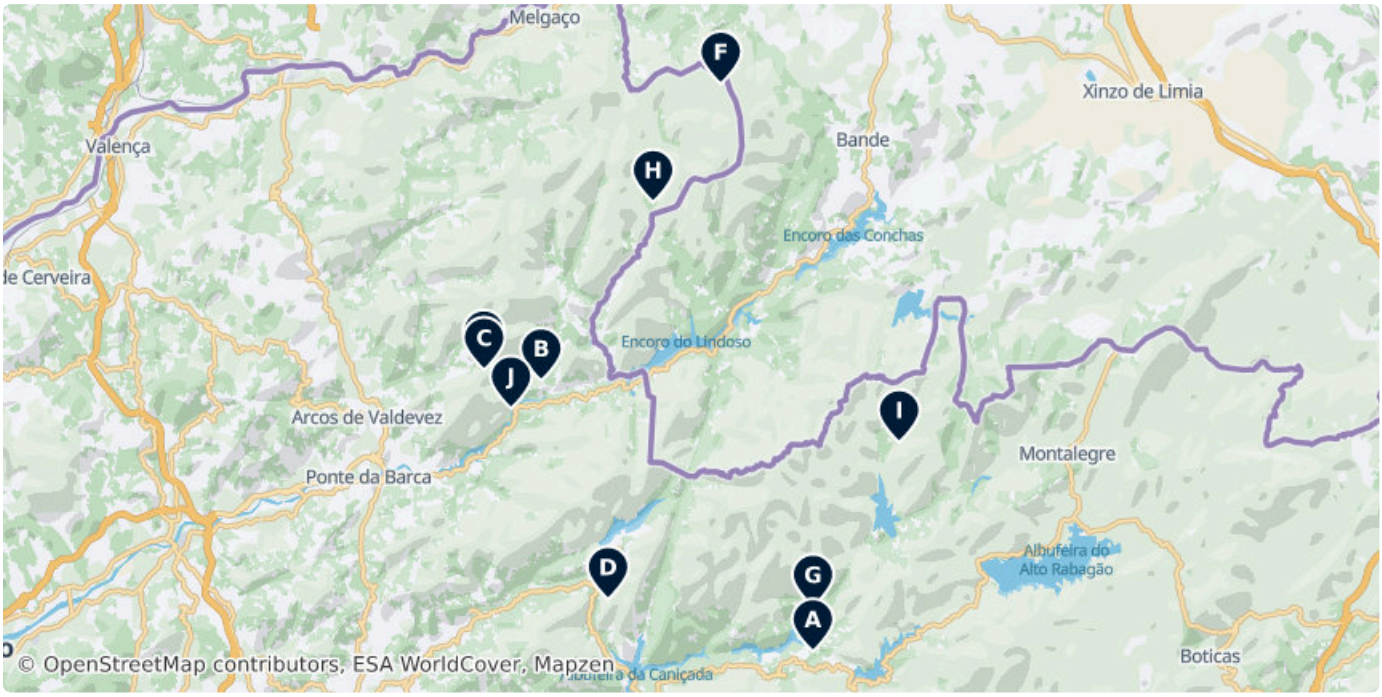
O Parque Cerdeiras

A nature park and eco-camping site located near Campo do Gerês, providing access to local hiking trails.

(41.84255, -7.94035)

Ancient Sites and Ruins

This collection features archaeological sites across the Peneda-Gerês National Park, ranging from Neolithic megaliths and Iron Age hillforts to medieval monastic ruins. Highlights include the communal granite granaries of Soajo, the legendary Misarela bridge, and the Cistercian ruins of Santa Maria das Júnias. These sites illustrate thousands of years of human settlement, religious history, and agricultural traditions in the rugged northern Portuguese landscape.





A Ponte da Misarela

Medieval stone bridge spanning the Rabagão River. Known for its single arch and local legends, it connects the districts of Braga and Vila Real.

5470, Portugal (41.69200, -8.01951)



B Espigueiros e Eira Comunitária do Soajo

A communal threshing floor featuring 24 granite granaries built on stilts. These 18th and 19th-century structures were used to store corn and protect it from rodents.

PT (41.87231, -8.26220)

C Mamoa do Mezio 6

A Neolithic burial mound within the Mezio Megalithic Complex, consisting of a stone chamber covered by an earthen mound.

(41.87945, -8.31328)

D Povoado da Calcedónia

Ruins of an Iron Age fortified settlement located on a high rocky plateau. The site features remnants of defensive walls and circular stone dwellings.

4840, Portugal (41.72677, -8.20251)

E Anta do Mezio

A well-preserved megalithic dolmen or funerary chamber dating back to the Neolithic period, part of the broader archaeological circuit in the Mezio region.

(Unnamed Road), 4970, Portugal (41.88425, -8.31347)

F Monumentos Megalíticos e de Arte Rupestre do Planalto de Castro Laboreiro

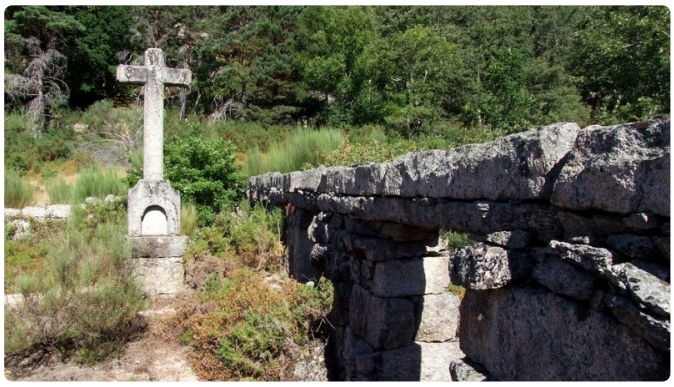
A vast archaeological area on the Castro Laboreiro plateau containing dozens of Neolithic burial mounds and prehistoric rock carvings.

4960, Portugal (42.06923, -8.10183)

G Sepultura do Frade

An anthropomorphic grave carved directly into a granite boulder, likely dating from the early medieval period.

(41.72170, -8.01944)



H Aqueduto de Pontes

A traditional stone aqueduct in the village of Pontes, designed to transport water for agricultural irrigation across the rugged terrain of Castro Laboreiro.

4960, Portugal (41.99078, -8.16238)



I Mosteiro de S. Maria das Júnias

12th-century Cistercian monastery ruins situated in a remote valley. The site preserves Romanesque and Gothic architectural elements, including the church and parts of the cloister.

5470, Portugal (41.83123, -7.94248)

J Mosteiro de Ermelo

Remains of a 12th-century Cistercian abbey. The Romanesque church stands as a testament to the religious history of the Lima River valley.

(Unnamed Road), Ermelo 4970, Portugal (41.85368, -8.28921)

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