



Sabor lakes

Protected area

Site of Community
Importance and Special
Protection Area of the rivers
Sabor and Maças

Location

Parada, Alfândega da Fé

Sabor Trail

Sabor river is considered one of the most amazing Portuguese rivers. It used to flow between hills and steep valleys, from its source, in Spain, into the Douro river (Portugal).

This situation has changed with the building of a big dam in its lower part (Baixo Sabor Hydroelectric Power Plant). The wild river has changed to form an amazing complex of crystalline lakes (Cidalhes, Medal and Santuários), interconnected by tributaries and cliffs, with an extension of 70 km.

The new landscape has kept the same irregular skyline of *Trás-os-Montes* and received a huge 'sea' of freshwater, creating a unique landscape, and making it a natural sightseeing point.

The biophysical recovery of the area around the reservoir is notorious. Nature has been gradually adapting itself to the new landscape, creating conditions for a natural recolonization of this area by fauna and flora.

In the Sabor trail, specifically designed to observe this idyllic scenery, three observation points are outlined: the magnificent *Santo Antão da Barca* sanctuary (a church transported stone by stone from its original location, now submerged in the reservoir); the top of the Aguilhão, one of the highest points of this trail; and the bank of Santuários lake.

This trail can be visited all year round. Nevertheless, the longest and mildest days of Spring, in which the landscape is filled with flowering plants with a wide range of colours and perfumes, is the best time to visit the trail.

Fauna

The Sabor river valley, one of the Portuguese most important protected areas for fauna, is the home of a huge diversity of wild animals, adapted to the dry, arid and steep rocky environments. The steep slopes are dominated by shrublands, contrasting with the aquatic and semiaquatic environments of the river and its banks.



These lands are the realm of birds of prey and along this trail it is possible to watch some of the most emblematic ones. The rare and splendid golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and the booted eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) are regular visitors. In the massive rocky cliffs visible on the horizon, big white spots are a sign of a regular presence of the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*). These cliffs are also the nesting place of some other rare birds of

prey, such as the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). They frequently fly around this area and are regular visitors to this trail.

Other more common birds are constant visitors of this path, since its beginning until the lake banks. Among these, some of the most interesting are the European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), the thekla's lark (*Galerida theklae*) and a variety of swallows (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*, *Cecropis daurica*, *Hirundo rustica*, *Delichon urbicum*).

The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are probably the most common mammals here, but due to their secretive habits, they are not seen very often. On the contrary, reptiles like the ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*), common on these rocky environments, are frequently seen sunbathing on the rocks and tracks.

Even the lakes, still under processes of 'renaturalizing', have been colonized by many species, typical from aquatic environments, like grebes (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Podiceps cristatus*), the great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) or the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*).

- **Booted eagle is migratory bird that can be seen here from March until September**

- **European rabbits are the most common prey of many endangered species, such as the golden eagle**

RED FOX
(*Vulpes vulpes*)

BOOTED EAGLE
(*Hieraaetus pennatus*)



Flora and vegetation



The Sabor trail goes through an area of vegetation partially changed by human action. Even so, on this path, you can still see some spots with native woodlands, such as the holm oak and prickly juniper woodlands. These are protected habitats, defined by the presence of adult prickly juniper trees in open woodlands. In places with low vegetation cover or with extremely

dry and poor soil, prickly juniper shrublands are the dominant vegetation. Nowadays, these shrubby junipers are very common in abandoned farming areas, due to the fast spreading ability of prickly juniper.

The most common shrublands and thickets are rockrose shrublands with gum rockrose (*Cistus ladanifer*) and white Spanish broom (*Cytisus multiflorus*). Other types, such as the bridal broom shrublands with retama (*Retama sphaerocarpa*), Spanish lavender (*Lavandula pedunculata*) and white Spanish broom, are usually present in the drier areas. Dry pastures of annual plants, with many different species of clover, grow



between these shrublands and thickets. Among the plants that grow in these pastures you can distinguish a small grass that only exists along the river Douro basin: *Holcus annuus* subsp. *duriensis*, a plant protected by European Union legislation.

- Prickly juniper fruits are included in some animals' diet, such as badgers and foxes

- River Douro endemic plant *Holcus annuus* subsp. *duriensis* is listed on the Habitats Directive, Annex II, because of its conservation value

HOLM OAK AND PRICKLY JUNIPER WOODLANDS

HOLCUS ANNUUS SUBSP. *DURIENSIS*

Geology



The Sabor trail crosses an important mountain ridge, surrounded on one side by the Escadarias stream and by the Sabor river on the other. On the ridge it is possible to observe the massive quartzite blocks, very resistant to erosion. Near the start of this trail, you can see a sequence of argillaceous schist that is gradually replaced by mica schists and phyllite. In spite of this, the landscape pattern mainly consists of schist relief. About 500 meters in to the trail, you can see a stream, whose outline is probably defined by a geological

fault. Around the stream there are mainly phyllites, but also a few outcrops of schist, that are rare here but become more dominant along the way. In the second half of the trail, it is possible to distinguish an important lithological transition, caused by a tectonic carriage, from schistous grounds to quartzite, signing with precision the contact of the Allochthonous Superior Complex with the Parautotactone Complex. This change is clearly seen on a prominent geomorphological transition quite visible on the East hillsides (on the left side of the track).

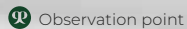
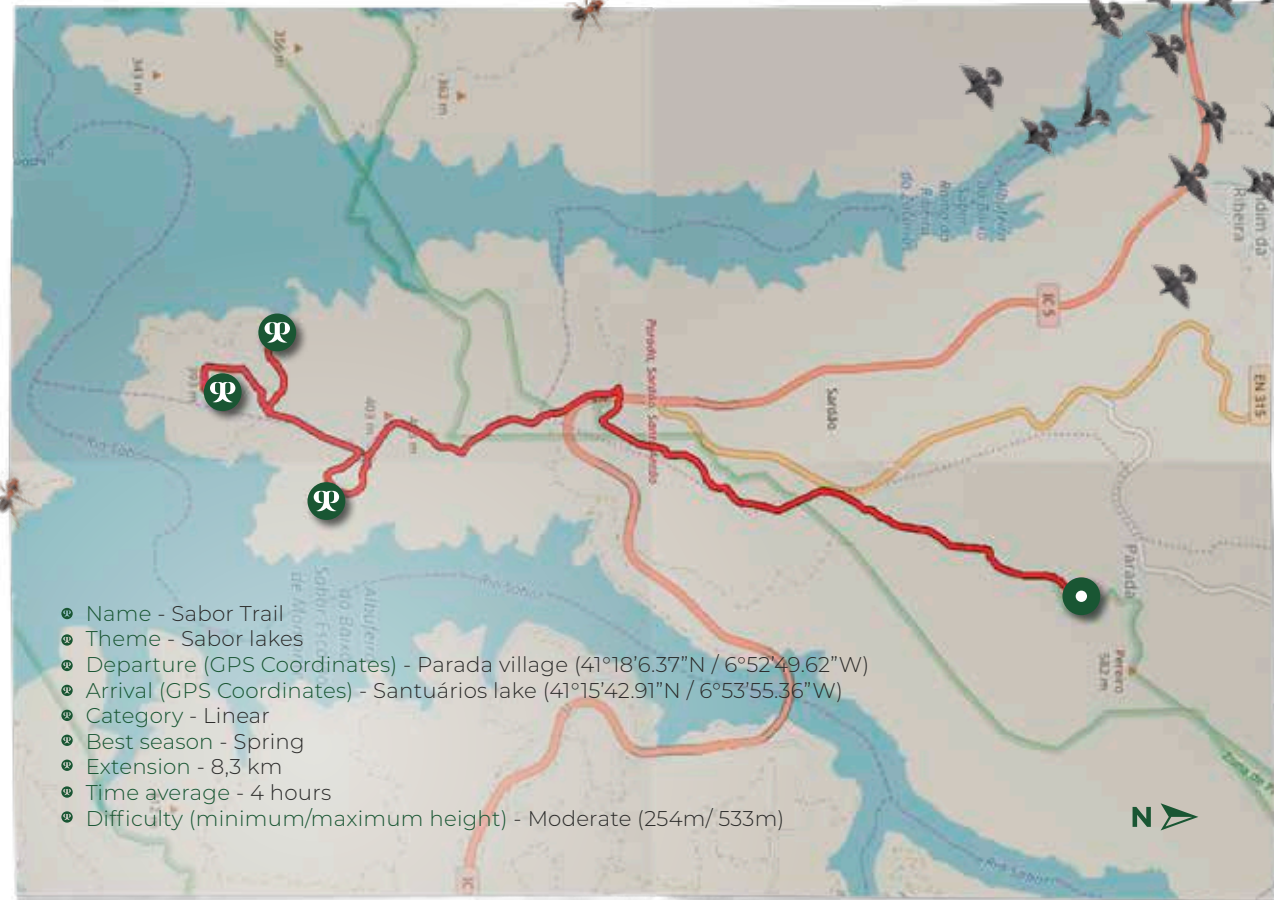


- Along this trail you can see various types of metamorphic rocks: quartzite, schist, mica schists and phyllite

- Some of the geological transitions visible along the trail can be found on the passage form ridge of mountains to slope areas

PANORAMIC VIEW, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LOCAL GEOMORPHOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE

TRANSITION BETWEEN SCHISTOUS AND QUARTZITE SOILS



Altitude (m)

250

300

350

400

450

500

Distance (m)

0

500

1000

1500

2000

2500

3000

3500

4000

4500

5000

5500

6000

6500

7000

7500

8000

Useful contact numbers

- Town council (+351) 279 468 120
- Tourist office (+351) 279 462 739 / 279 460 020
- Fire brigade (+351) 279 462 429
- GNR (National Republican Guard) (+351) 279 462 103
- Forest protection (+351) 117
- SOS (+351) 112

Attention

- Follow only the marked routes
- Avoid noise and attitudes that disturb local peace
- Do not disturb animals, observe them from a distance
- Do not collect plants, animals, rocks or artifacts
- Do not light a fire
- Do not litter; please use the containers provided



In the Portuguese and European contexts, *Terras de Trás-os-Montes* (Lands of Trás-os-Montes) present a unique natural value, with extraordinary ecological and ecotourist potential, still unknown. It is a region with countless protected areas, rare species and incredible natural events.



The *Nove Passos* (nine steps) project aims to unveil this incredible natural heritage; while promoting the conservation of the region's main natural values, through the dissemination of 9 trails.

We suggest a complete adventure, carried out in 9 steps, one per municipality, all within the most important protected areas for Nature Conservation in Portugal.

In each step, we suggest a carefully selected trail to explore specific natural themes, which, represent the natural areas where they are inserted.

The Sabor trail is one of the suggested natural steps. Come and meet them all and stamp your natural passport.

Visit these 9 themes of biodiversity, geology and landscape and become an expert in the *Lands of Trás-os-Montes*.

9 Sabor trail

Sabor lakes - Alfândega da fé

Next steps

9 Carvalho trail

Red deer - Bragança

9 Quercus trail

Birds at the Azibo reservoir - Macedo de Cavaleiros

9 São João das Arribas trail

Vultures - Miranda do Douro

9 Vale de Lobo trail

Cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands - Mirandela

9 Cascata da Faia da Água Alta trail

Cascata da Faia da Água Alta - Mogadouro

9 Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha trail

River Tua riparian gallery - Vila Flor

9 Castelo de Algos trail

The Angueira river fauna - Vimioso

9 Biospots (Alto da Ciradilha) trail

Butterflies and other invertebrates - Vinhais





9passos.cim-ttm.pt

TERRAS DE **TTM**
TRÁS-OS-MONTES

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