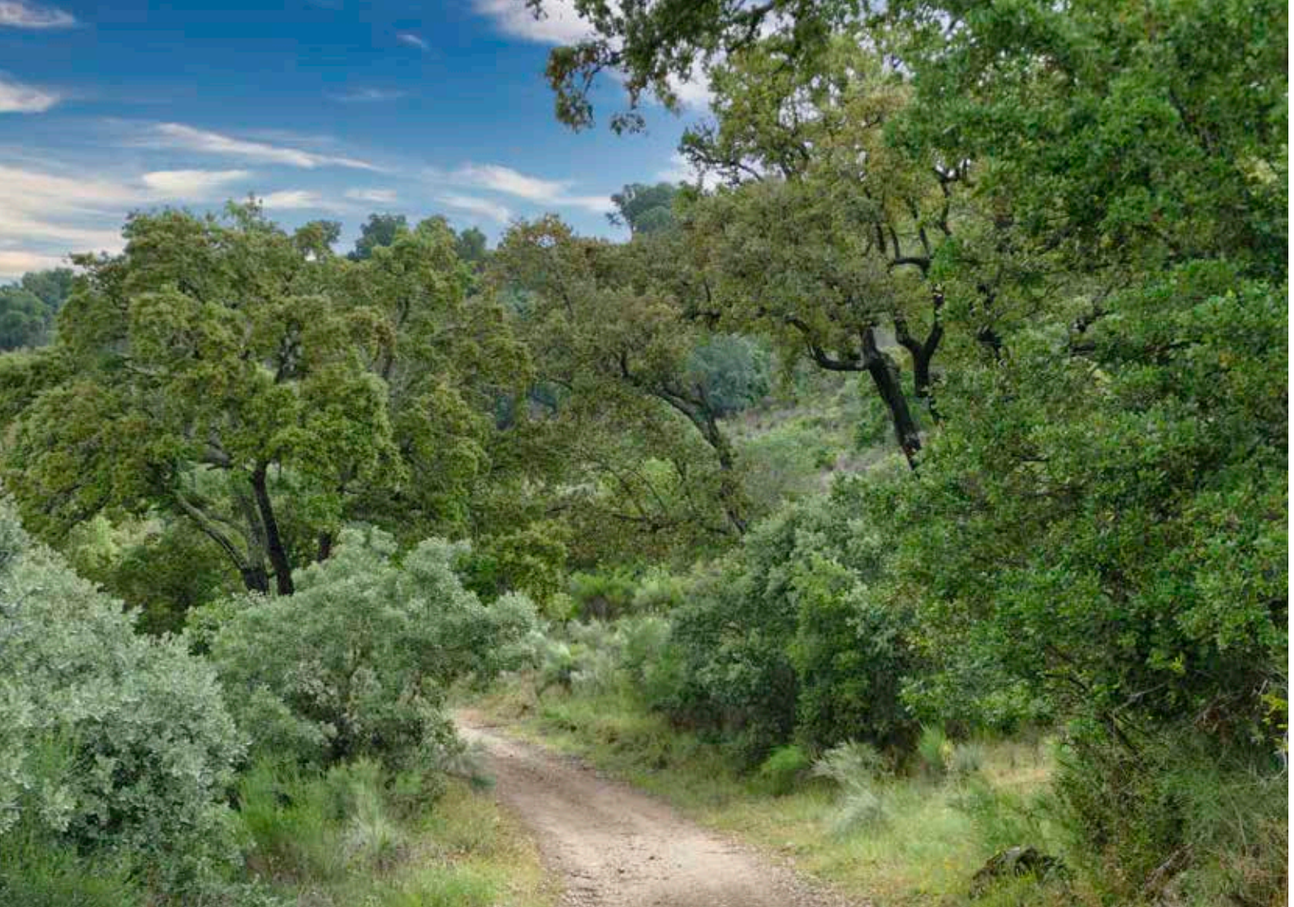
novepassos

NAS TERRAS DE TRÁS-OS-MONTES

TTM TERRAS DE TRÁS-OS-MONTES

Mirandela

EN



Cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands

Protected area
Site of Community Importance Romeu

Location
Vale de Lobo, Mirandela

Vale de Lobo Trail

The Site of Community Importance Romeu is a protected area, classified specifically for the conservation of some very important native Portuguese woodlands. This protected area includes very extensive areas of cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands. In fact, this is one of the places where those natural habitats are best represented at a regional, Portuguese and European levels.

Cork oak woodlands are generally areas of great biological diversity, with herbs and shrubs strata of high specific richness, that serve as shelter for dozens of animals. They are often exploited for cork, conferring them a significant direct economic value. These woodlands are relatively well represented in the Mediterranean area of *Trás-os-Montes*.

Prickly juniper woodlands are rarer. They are legally protected woodlands (priority conservation by European Union), defined by the presence of adults of prickly juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*) trees in association with cork oak (*Quercus suber*), holm oak (*Quercus rotundifolia*) or both.

This singular floristic combination may be the result of human intervention which, by opening clearings in the cork oak and holm oak woodlands, permitted a heliophilous species, such as the prickly juniper, to grow. In deeper soils prickly juniper grows in association with cork oak. The association between prickly juniper with holm oak is less frequent and normally occurs in thinner soils. This is the case of the prickly juniper woodlands present along the Vale de Lobo trail.

This trail has been selected to illustrate these fascinating natural woodlands. It stretches itself along a traditional agricultural landscape, crossing this relatively well preserved native Portuguese woodlands. Along this trail, two observation points are outlined, the first in a cork oak woodland and the second one in a prickly juniper woodland.

The blooming season, Spring, is the most adequate season for visit the woodlands in all their splendor.

Fauna

This trail passes through a very beautiful mosaic of traditional agricultural landscape and remarkable woodlands, ecological niches particularly rich for fauna. As a whole, these areas support communities with more than 150 vertebrate species.

Among the many species present, the bird diversity is highlighted. Observation of red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*), the blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), the woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), the European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), the common linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), the tawny pipit (*Anthus campestris*) and the common hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) are constant along this trail.

The short-toed snake-eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) and the woodchat shrike (*Lanius senator*) are noteworthy for being protected species in Portugal, but relatively common in this place during Summer season.

The European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), one of the most colorful birds that occurs in Portugal, is also a spectacular presence. It is not threatened in Portugal, but it is uncommon in the North. In this trail it is abundant along the initial stretch, generally in small flocks.

Mammals, more discrete, may be identified essentially by their tracks and signs. The European badger (*Meles meles*), is one of the most common here, but very elusive. It moves mainly at night, imprinting muddier pathways with its typical footprints. The western European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), also relatively abundant, is less secretive and may be observed, with a little bit of luck, at the end of the day.

Reptiles and amphibians are also present. Different small lizards, such as the Iberian wall lizard (*Podarcis hispanica*), are found on rocks during the day. Amphibians spend most of the day hidden. Noteworthy in this group is the natterjack toad (*Epidalea calamita*), a robust toad, with a particular reproductive strategy. This specie is adapted to explore temporary small ponds, such as puddles of rain, where it lays its eggs. The natterjack tadpoles develop quickly and are able to live out of water.

• The European bee-eater nests in sandy banks and, as the name indicates, eats bees, wasps and other invertebrates

• In spite of belonging to carnivorous group, the European badger has an opportunistic and omnivorous diet, consuming mainly fruits, invertebrates and small mammals

EUROPEAN BADGER
(Meles meles)

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER
(Merops apiaster)

Flora and vegetation

The Vale de Lobo trail is located in an important area for conservation of pure cork oak (*Quercus suber*) woodlands and cork oak and holm oak woodlands in association with adults of prickly juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*). These formations grow on drier and more arid soils, often close to rocky outcrops. In spite of the their presence in this trail, those native woodlands are not the dominant formations in the landscape. Broom (*Cytisus spp.*) and Spanish lavender (*Lavandula pedunculata*) shrublands are very common and grow side by side with open areas dominated by herbaceous vegetation.

In the past, sheep pastures, named bulbous bluegrass dry pastures, grew all around inland of *Trás-os-Montes*. These pastures have become dominant in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula, when sheep transhumance was a prominent activity. One of the dominant plants of these pasturelands is the burrowing clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*). This clover can resist the trampling and pasture of domestic animals, and is named after the curious fact that it buries its own fruits after blossom.

• Young leaves of *Rumex induratus* that grow near walls can be used in salads

• Bulbous bluegrass dry pastures correspond to dry vivacious lawns, typical of areas pastured by flocks of sheep. They are declining nowadays, owing to flock's number reductions in the area

RUMEX INDURATUS

OPEN SHRUBLANDS

Geology

In geological terms the Vale de Lobo trail is marked by phyllites and quartzites, as well as by different tectonic structures of different dimensions. At this level, it is highlighted a tectonic thrust fault whose water line (at the end of the trail) marks contact between Allochthonous soils and Parauthoctone soils.

Also worthy of note are structures like joints (simple fracture) and thin threads of quartz. At numerous road slopes fissile fractures are observed, resulting from phyllite stratification. This natural cleavage process also results from metamorphic fabric of those rocks.

Phyllites highlight a high level of alteration, which is at the origin of clay soil concentration fractions. In the middle of the trail, phyllites give way to prominent outcrops of quartzites and quartzophylites. These rocks are more resistant to erosion than the phyllites, which is why they are at the origin of some ridge crest.

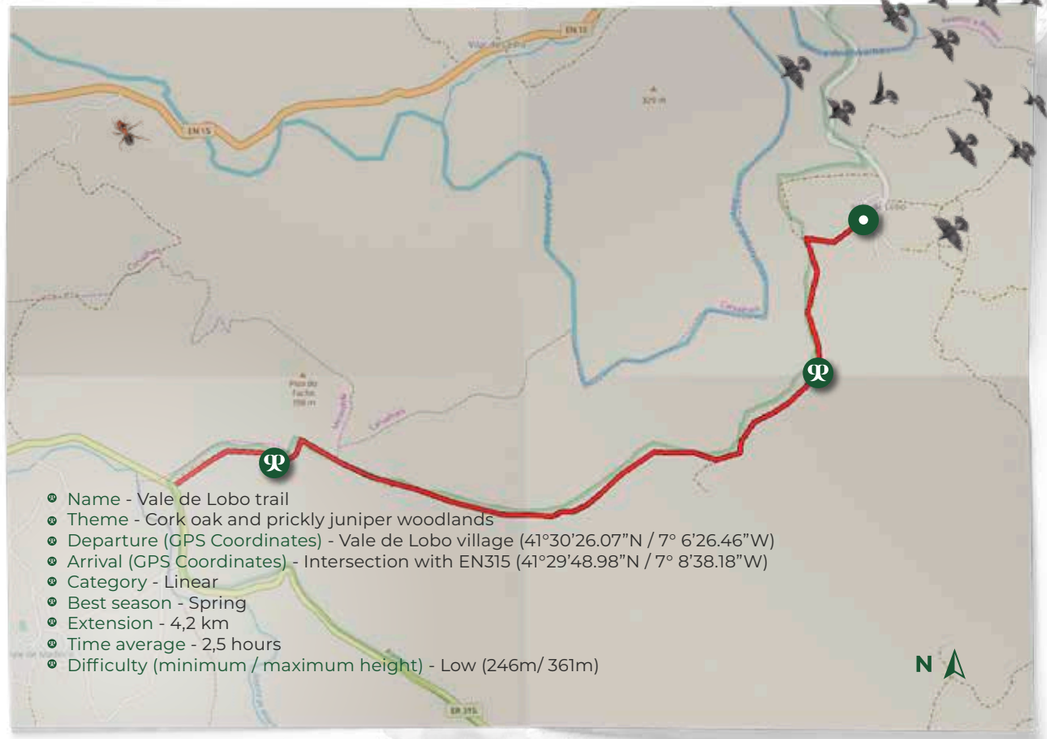
• Along the trail, it is possible to observe different types of metamorphic rocks, mainly phyllites and quartzites

• The relief of the areas surrounding the trail is a reflection of the different rocky substrata and tectonic structures of the region

BLOCKS OF QUARTZITE AND RIDGE UPSTREAM

CREST VALLEY IN A TECTONIC CARREAMENT ZONE

Trail



- Name - Vale de Lobo trail
- Theme - Cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands
- Departure (GPS Coordinates) - Vale de Lobo village (41°30'26.07"N / 7° 6'26.46"W)
- Arrival (GPS Coordinates) - Intersection with EN315 (41°29'48.98"N / 7° 8'38.18"W)
- Category - Linear
- Best season - Spring
- Extension - 4,2 km
- Time average - 2,5 hours
- Difficulty (minimum / maximum height) - Low (246m/ 361m)

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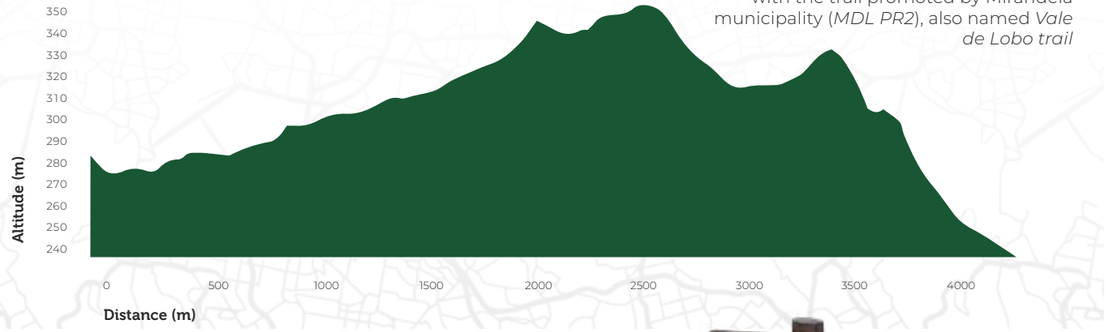
Start Observation point

Vale de Lobo trail partially coincides with the trail promoted by Mirandela municipality (*MDL PR2*), also named *Vale de Lobo trail*



Useful contact numbers

- Town council (+351) 278 200 200
- Tourist office (+351) 278 203 143
- Fire brigade (+351) 278 201 080
- GNR (National Republican Guard) (+351) 278 201 000
- 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

novepassos
NAS TERRAS DE TRÁS-OS-MONTES

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 thus 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, in one way or another, represent the natural areas where they are inserted.

The Vale de Lobo 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*.

Vale de Lobo trail
Cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands - Mirandela

Next steps

- **Sabor trail**
  Sabor lakes - Alfândega da fé
- **Carvalho trail**
  Red deer - Bragança
- **Quercus trail**
  Birds at the Azibo reservoir - Macedo de Cavaleiros
- **São João das Arribas trail**
  Vultures - Miranda do Douro
- **Cascata da Faia da Água Alta trail**
  Cascata da Faia da Água Alta - Mogadouro
- **Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha trail**
  River Tua riparian gallery - Vila Flor
- **Castelo de Algoso trail**
  The Angueira river fauna - Vimioso
- **Biospots (Alto da Ciradelha) trail**
  Butterflies and other invertebrates - Vinhais

9passos.cim-ttm.pt

CIM-TTM
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