

novepassos 
NAS TERRAS DE TRÁS-OS-MONTES



TTM TERRAS DE
TRÁS-OS-MONTES

Vila Flor



River Tua riparian gallery

Protected area

Tua Valley Regional Natural Park

Location

Ribeirinha, Vila Flor

Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha Trail

The Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha trail is located in the Tua Valley Regional Natural Park, in the lower course region of the Tua river. Here the main feature is an element of vital importance for the magnificent Tua river: its riparian gallery.

The construction of the Tua river dam has contributed to a significant diminution of riparian zones of flowing waters, with mature riverine woodlands, dominated by native trees typical of these environments. For that reason, the riparian woodlands that still have a good conservation status gain even more importance. This trail highlights precisely one of the best examples of that biotype in the Tua river.

At the designated observation point, the riparian galleries are present in all their splendor, forming a mosaic of protected habitats (under the ‘Habitats’ EU Directive), with a very rich and diversified fauna and flora communities associated.

The most significant and best represented habitat type are the natural riparian woodlands dominated by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). In this area it is still

possible to see spots of other three types of protected habitats: the *habitat* 3270 (in the zone with small sediment accumulation, dominated by annual plants such as the *Polygonum hydropiper* and *Bidens frondosa*); the *habitat* 3260 (communities dominated by hydrophytes, specially *Ranunculus* spp.) and *habitat* 6430 (on the riparian woodlands edges, dominated by communities of large size herbaceous plants).

This complex of vegetal formations represents an incalculable natural value, both for its intrinsic value but also for its role as a supporting element for fluvial ecosystems. This complex riparian galleries are fundamental to stabilize the riverbed and purify water.

This trail may be visited all year round, although Spring and the beginning of Summer, coinciding with blossom season and the peak of wild animal activity, is the recommended period.

Fauna

In this trail our attention is particularly drawn to the multiple species inhabiting the transition zone between land and aquatic ecosystems. Here, the complexity of the riparian galleries is reflected in the richness of the vertebrate and invertebrate communities.

Amphibians are well represented. Perez's frog (*Pelophylax perezi*) is here extraordinarily abundant. Less frequent, but present in specific areas, are two species of native newts, the Iberian newt (*Lissotriton boscai*) and the marbled newt (*Triturus marmoratus*).

Among the reptiles, the Mediterranean pond turtle (*Mauremys leprosa*) is relatively frequent in small groups, exposed to the sun on rocks of the riverbed. Still in the aquatic environment, the viperine water snake (*Natrix maura*) is also a common presence. The bigger Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*) is more discrete and can only be seen on land, along the pathways and agricultural surrounding areas, where it is common. Both are inoffensive to humans.

The riparian galleries are shelter for dozens of bird species, that frequently feed in the river or agricultural fields. Some specifically associated with the riparian environment are abundant, such as the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), the grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) and the great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*). The common sandpiper (*Actitis*

hypoleucos) and the little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*) are also regular but less common visitors.



Generalist bird species, such as the long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), the great tit (*Parus major*), the European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), the European greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), the common chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), the curl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*) and the European turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), are also frequent in the riverside woodlands. This is also the case of the black kite (*Milvus migrans*), a migrant bird of prey.

Regarding mammals, the otter (*Lutra lutra*) is the main river inhabitant. Along the banks, the genet (*Genetta genetta*) seems to be particularly common, exploiting small rodents and insectivorous mammals, typically abundant in the in the agricultural fields.

- The black kite nests regularly on alders and ash trees along the river Tua banks

- The common genet is one of the most abundant carnivores in the Portuguese fauna. It is very agile and frequently shelters in trees

GREY WAGTAIL
(*Motacilla cinerea*)

COMMON GENET
(*Genetta genetta*)



Flora and vegetation

The trail starts at the Vilarinho das Azenhas village and crosses an area of agricultural fields, where in Spring flourish plants like the common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), the Mediterranean marigold (*Coleostephus myconis*) and the Paterson's curse (*Echium plantagineum*). Two thistles with medicinal properties grow in the pathways: the milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*) and the blessed thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*).



Agricultural fields are fringed by walls and hedges where shrubs with beautiful flowers grow, such as wild roses. Their fruits are known for their high level of vitamin C, being used for syrup, tea and marmalade.



When the trail reaches the Tua river, it is possible to observe alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) woodlands. They grow in stretches where the river has a slower current. The sage-leaved willow thickets (*Salix salviifolia*), grow in river stretches with torrential current.

Along the river grow aquatic plants of big dimension, such as the stream water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus penicillatus*) and the loddon pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*). Those plants serve as a refuge and calmer feeding zones for small invertebrates.

- From a flora point of view, this trail presents a high specific richness, with about 300 taxa of vascular flora

- The milk thistle contains silymarin, a substance used for treatment and prevention of liver diseases through its anti-hepatotoxic action

MILK THISTLE
(*Silybum marianum*)

FLOWER GROWING FIELDS

Geology

Close to Vilarinho das Azenhas village, on the left bank of the Tua river, the dominant scenery corresponds to a flattened valley of schist and clay. Nevertheless, along the river, the geology is marked by schists and quartzite alternation. Geomorphologically, quartzites levels stand out among all other lithologies, because they are distributed along ridges and steep hillsides.



A long part of the trail is parallel to the river meandering features, where fields less resistant to erosion are concentrated, such as mudstones and alluvial deposits.

Roughly in the middle of the trail, you observe rocks more resistant to erosion, just like quartzphyllites. Given the metamorphic bands that they display, sometimes quartzphilites resemble schists, even though they are much harder and little altered.



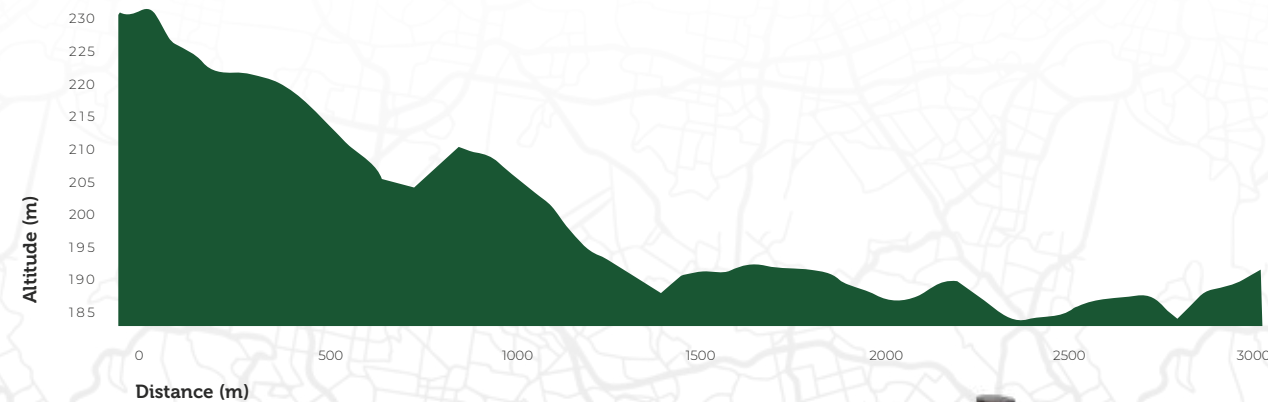
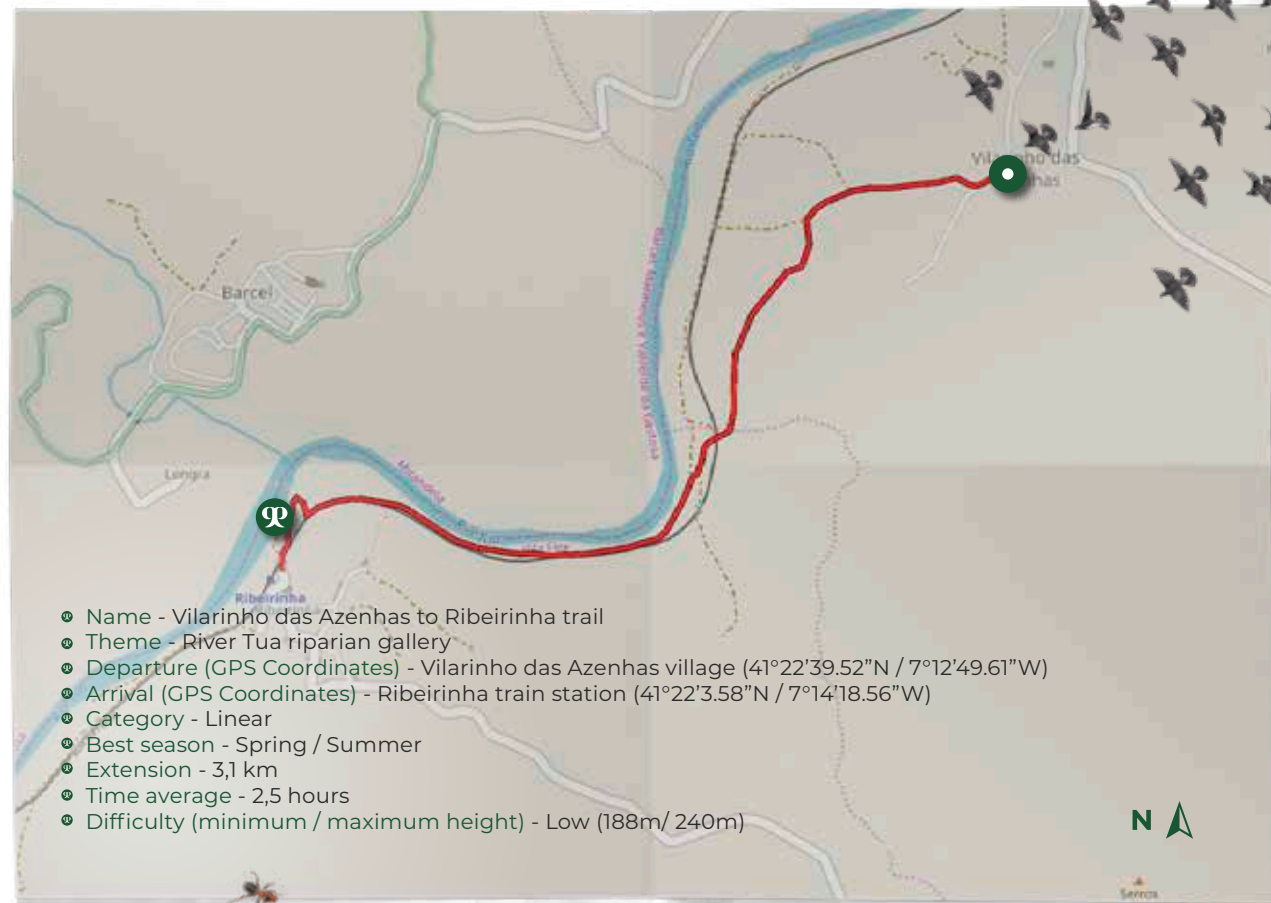
Lithological contacts are common along the trail, sometimes gradually among phyllites, quartzphyllites and quartzites, other times in a more perceptible way between pelitic and quartzitic schists.

- In this trail it is possible to observe various types of rocks, including schists, quartzites and quartzphyllites. Quartzites, more resistant to erosion, normally occur in ridge areas

- Along a large part of the trail it is possible to observe a fertile farming plain with schists and clay levels

OUTCROP OF QUARTZPHYLLITE
ALONG THE LEFT BANK OF THE TUA
RIVER

FERTILE PLAIN OF SCHIST AND CLAY



Useful contact numbers

- Ⓜ Town council (+351) 278 510 100
- Ⓜ Tourist office (+351) 278 510 100
- Ⓜ Fire brigade (+351) 278 518 150
- Ⓜ GNR (National Republican Guard) (+351) 278 518 130
- Ⓜ 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 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 Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha 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 Vilarinho das Azenhas to Ribeirinha trail River Tua riparian gallery - Vila Flor

Next steps

- ⑩ **Sabor trail**
Sabor lakes - Alfândega da fé
- ⑪ **Carvalho trail**
Red deer - Bragança
- ⑫ **Quercus trail**
Birds at the Azibo reservoir - Macedo de Cavaleiros
- ⑬ **São João das Arribas trail**
Vultures - Miranda do Douro
- ⑭ **Vale de Lobo trail**
Cork oak and prickly juniper woodlands - Mirandela
- ⑮ **Cascata da Faia da Água Alta trail**
Cascata da Faia da Água Alta - Mogadouro
- ⑯ **Castelo de Algosó trail**
The Angueira river fauna - Vimioso
- ⑰ **Biospots (Alto da Ciradilha) trail**
Butterflies and other invertebrates - Vinhais





9passos.cim-ttm.pt

TERRAS DE **TTM**
TRÁS-OS-MONTES

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