ÁGUA DA PRATA
ÉVORA AQUEDUCT, GREEN PATH

The Aqueduct of Água da Prata (literally Silver Water) was the most important hydraulic structure constructed in Portugal during the 16th century.

The innumerable conservation works made over time were not sufficient to ensure an appropriate and regular supply of public water to the city, a situation which was only resolved with the great reform initiated in 1873, which gave the Aqueduct its current appearance between S. Bento de Castris and Metrogos. The Aqueduct still fulfils its function today, contributing to the flow of water supply the city.

In addition to the monumental arcade, classified as a National Monument (1910), the Aqueduct is an immense construction approximately 19 km long, from the spring of Divor to the interior of the city. Of this total distance, the green path which has currently been created presents the essential of the sixteenth and nineteenth century construction works, over a distance of 8.3 km between the Convent of Cartuxa and the road of Arcos do Divor. Combining heritage, historical and technical aspects with the surrounding landscape, uncommonly beautiful and diversified, this project presents a double attraction, both as a centre for public benefit as well as a tourist resource for the city.

ARCEDIAGO FOUNTAIN

André de Resende, a Dominican friar born in Évora, was a distinguished humanist of international reputation. As a man with a classical culture, he defended, before king D. João III, the “re-foundation” of the Aqueduct as a sign of urbanity, worthy of a city of a classical culture, he defended, before king D. João III, the “re-foundation” of the Aqueduct as a sign of urbanity, worthy of a city.

His name lives on at the fountain he ordered to be built (c. 1535) close to the Aqueduct and his country house, commonly known as the Archdeacon’s farm (quinta do Arcediago). His name lives on at the fountain he ordered to be built (c. 1535) close to the Aqueduct and his country house, commonly known as the Archdeacon’s farm (quinta do Arcediago).

This fountain, constructed as a place of repose and poetic delight, still has the remains of two Latin inscriptions, both written by André de Resende.

16TH CENTURY ARCADE

The Aqueduct of Água da Prata, built between 1533–37, was the largest hydraulic project of the reign of King D. João III and one of the symbols of the golden period of Évora as the country’s second city for the court.

After two unsuccessful attempts, occurring during the reigns of kings D. João II and D. Manuel I, its conclusion enabled minimising the serious and recurrent problem of lack of water in the city, above all during the summer months.

The construction work contract was awarded to the architect Francisco de Arruda, who directed it with speed and efficiency, covering a distance of approximately 1km between the springs of Graça do Divor, and the no longer existent fountain of Praça Grande (current Praça do Giraldo).

The majestic arcade of round arches reaches the height of its splendour as it crosses the road to Arcosolo, emphasised by the little tower on the main pillar, where the dome, still of Manueline style, contrasts with the classical forms of the pilasters and the shell covered niches holding the modern images of Saint Bruno and Saint Bento, patron saints of the two neighbouring monasteries.

VISITORS’ BOXES

Along the aqueduct and installed at regular intervals, are boxes for visiting and decanting water. These boxes contain a small decanting well, made in masonry and sometimes covered in ceramic tiles, deeper than the pipe, where solid residues dragged along by the water flow are deposited. When the aqueduct is located at ground level, the boxes are built with a side door which enables access to the gallery and the cleaning of the accumulated residues.

The 16th century visitors’ and decantation boxes were built in a cubic shape, with a brick arch, the top of which would have been finished off with a pinnacle.

During the 19th century reconstruction, cylindrical boxes were made with small conical trunk towers, with windows for ventilation. Upstream of the boxes is a water bypass to an exterior conduit, to keep the box dry during cleaning or repair procedures.

19TH CENTURY AQUEDUCT

In spite of the various improvement works, the old 16th century aqueduct was in a very ruined state by the last decades of the 19th century and incapable of meeting the city’s water consumption needs. From 1873 onwards, the structure was finally reconstructed following a new model of conduit, which permitted the transport of water to the city in greater quantity and with better quality. After the repairs and reconstructions had been completed, the aqueduct, according to measurement dated 1879, transported a daily volume of 847m³.

During this reconstruction, the original layout of the aqueduct was shortened, both through the opening of trenches as well as through the construction of arcs, thus avoiding some stretches going around hills and valleys.

The aqueduct which was reconstructed in the 19th century is visible along the entire surface layout between S. Bento and Metrogos and is often accompanied by ruins of stretches of the 16th century aqueduct.

TOP PIPE

On this stretch of Pombal Brook, the aqueduct crosses the main orographic formation along its route. This arcade was built in the 19th century, called Cano Alto (literally Top Pipe), to cut the distance required to go round the valley.

This stretch of the stream still has vestiges of typically Mediterranean woods which, due to the less attractive steeper slopes for agro-pastoral uses, have resisted the human occupation of the land. This landscape contrasts with the one seen towards the east, dominated by small agricultural properties.

Noteworthy, in this little wood, is the existence of herbaceous, bush and tree species, including climbing plants, the floristic combination of which differs according to proximity to the waterline. Closest to the stream are the species requiring more water (ash, laurel, willow, ivy, blackberry…), in contrast to the species more adapted to dry conditions, which grow further away from the waterline (holly oak, olive tree, zarzaparrilla, strawberry tree…).

STANDARDS FOR USAGE

The Água da Prata — Évora Aqueduct environmental route is destined for walks:
• Parking and the circulation of horse-riders and motorised vehicles is not permitted.
• The transit or permanency of cattle is not permitted along the route, except for crossing.
• Respect the other users;
• Do not damage equipment and signs;
• Keep the route clean: take your rubbish to the bins at the entrance of the route;
• Dogs must be kept on a leash and wear a muzzle

Consult the Regulation on Environmental Routes at www.evora.net/percursos

RECOMMENDATIONS

Wear sports clothing and footwear, a hat, and take enough water and food taking into account the time of the walk

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Évora Fire Station 266702122
National Republican Guard 266748400
Public Security Police 266702022
National SOS Assistance Number 112
Forrest Protection 112

RESPONSIBLE ENTITY

City Hall of Évora 266777000