



The Natural Park of the Northern Coast stretches along approximately 18km of coastline, from the mouth of the Neiva River to the Apúlia area in the municipality of Esposende. It covers an area of 10,645.4 hectares, with 8,587.2 hectares of marine and estuarine areas and 1,058.2 hectares of terrestrial land.

The Natural Park is part of the site of community importance (Special Conservation Area of the Northern Coast - PTCON0017), a narrow protection area of 2,798.03 hectares created as part of the Natura 2000 conservation programs of the European Union, which extends from Apúlia (to the south) to the mouth of the Minho River (to the north).

Characterized by a flat coastal platform interrupted by fossil cliffs, the Park occupies the coastal strip dominated by dunes associated with the estuaries of the Cávado and Neiva rivers, extending into the marine domain.

The Natural Park of the Northern Coast was created in July 2006, resulting from the reclassification of the former Protected Landscape Area of the Esposende Coastline, which had already been created in 1987. Its creation aimed to protect and preserve the "physical, aesthetic, and landscape natural elements of the coastline of the municipality of Esposende" (Regulatory Decree No. 6/2005 of July 21, 2005).



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Welcome to the Natural Park of the Northern Coast!

Here, freedom and adventure await you amidst landscapes of shade, sun, and fog. Get ready to dive into a world of discoveries, where every habitat reveals a host of new knowledge and experiences!

For nature enthusiasts, hiking, cycling, and birdwatching are await you in multiple places filled with biodiversity! Stroll along themed trails and observe nature at the observation points and viewpoints, where every step is a discovery and a true and free connection to the wildlife dancing around you.

And how about feeling the adrenaline rush through your veins? Enjoy sports activities on land and sea, fueled by the wind and local rivers. Surf the waves and feel the cool breeze while kite-surfing or embark on an exciting canoeing journey.

But the park is not just about adventures. Find tranquility in every corner, perfect for a relaxing picnic or a refreshing snack. Enjoy the gentle sound of water, the warmth of the sun, and the shade of the trees. Here, rest is as rejuvenating as action.

So, bring your family, friends, or venture out alone.

In the Natural Park of the Northern Coast, the possibilities are as vast as the horizon stretching before you. Live unforgettable moments where nature and fun embrace in a warm hug. Come create memories that will last a lifetime!



Throughout the Natural Park, it is possible to occasionally find various manifestations of human presence in this territory, woven together like a mosaic. Whether through simple traces or beautiful architectural monuments, it is also the festivals and other popular traditions, in addition to demonstrations of faith, which constitute the defining traits of these communities.

Alongside traditions, habits, and customs, we also see scattered throughout the Natural Park various structures that bear the marks of resilience, presence, and cultivation of the land by the people of this community.

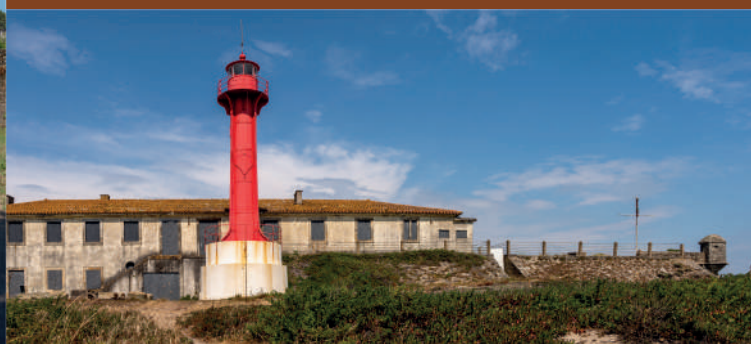
The oldest traces found in the PNLN (Northern Coast Natural Park), which attest to human presence, date back to prehistoric times and consist of carved lithic tools made from rolled quartzite pebbles found in Quaternary deposits. These artifacts confirm the presence and utilization of marine resources.

Not too far in the past and serving as evidence of the settlement of farming and fishing communities in Fão during the Middle Ages, we can see in the Medieval Cemetery of Barreiras the "forgotten faces" of the humble people of this community. This site is a nearly unique record of the Black Plague that ravaged Europe and Asia in the 14th century and also highlights one of the many Climate Changes in historical times.

Subsequently, in the Modern Age, we find examples of structures like the Fort of S. João Baptista and the Facho da Bonança, which were used for coastal defense and navigation support, providing further evidence of the community's settlement in this area and the importance of navigation along our coastline.

In more recent times, under the veil of spirituality, we occasionally observe throughout the entire area of the Natural Park some manifestations of faith and popular traditions, where the sacred and the profane blend in festivals and rituals. Examples of this include the Bonança chapel and the religious and popular festivals of S. Bartolomeu do Mar and Senhora da Guia.

Revealing more recent but rustic and self-sustaining ways of life, we see in the Fields in Masseiras and in the Windmills of Apúlia a portrait of economically challenging times for fishing-farming communities, who made their living from the sea and the land! Today, the windmills change their attire and serve as stages for the many walks that can be taken on gentle boardwalks, delighting photography enthusiasts who capture these idyllic scenes in countless ways! The new Sargaço Museum is a good example of preserving the local collective memory, aiming to introduce the identity of this community to new generations and visitors. Nevertheless, it is also essential to visit the Municipal Museum and the Maritime Museum, which preserve and promote the values of local fishing communities, fragments of the memories of seafarers.



Along a stretch of beaches and sea between the Neiva River and the Cávado River, the dunes display their splendor with a diversity of flora reflected in the mosaic of species that make up the dune vegetation. With an extensive dune system, accessible via boardwalks, species such as sand couch, sea lavender, sea holly, and goosefoot find their natural habitat in the sands.



Wild or more tourist-oriented beaches are a strong attraction for visitors. To the north of the Cávado River in Belinho, pebble-strewn beaches create unique landscapes. To the south, extensive golden sands dominate, with beaches like Ofir and Apúlia being sought-after holiday destinations.

The ocean, characterized by its cold waters and a wide range of habitats, defines the Marine Park and is known for its high biodiversity. Through diving activities, it is possible to discover life from the simplest sponges to more complex fish species like bass, sea bream, conger eel, sole, and pouting, making the marine waters of the PNLN consistently vibrant.

Taking advantage of the shelter provided by the estuarine environment, birdlife takes center stage with an interesting array of species such as the cormorant, osprey, purple heron, rock pipit, sandpipers, dunlins, and many other birds. The left bank of the Cávado River offers excellent conditions for observation through a boardwalk route over the salt marshes and saline meadows, interspersed with reeds where sea lavender occasionally stands out, with lookout points and observation points.



Pine forests planted along the seashore are a constant feature along the entire coastline, where it is still possible to find remnants of native forests between Fão and Apúlia (Masseiras trail), which once characterized the entire coastline with species such as oak, cork oak, laurel, ash, willow, and alder.

