

The Schist villages
6 days / 5 nights

Hidden between mountain slopes and leafy vegetation, the schist villages are one of Portugal's best kept secrets. The 27 villages, which designation derives from the stone used in the construction of its houses, which is abundant in the region, are spread across Serra do Açor and Serra da Lousã, with some being also located around the Zêzere river area.

Come and explore some of this villages and get to know these secret places and the wonders of nature.



Special sites and activities:

- relax on the river beaches of the schist villages
- try extreme sports in Serra da Lousã
- go hiking on the schist paths
- try the traditional coscoreis and cavacas and the Arbutus liqueur at Aldeia das Dez.
- Admire the Fraga da Pena waterfall
- buy herbs for cooking and tea
- enjoy the thrilling experience of the mountain bike trails

Day 1 – Lisbon – Gondramaz – Talasnal – Casal Novo – Chiqueiro

Departing from Lisbon early in the morning, it will take you approximately 2h30 hours before arriving at the wonders of the Schist villages. Entering in the Lousã mountains is an experience to your senses – the nature breeze and smell is the first thing you will notice, and then, when you get used to the sound of silence, the noises of the mountains will invade your ears and you'll notice the birds singing and the trees dancing with the wind.

The first stop of the day is the village of **Gondramaz** where the Portuguese poet Miguel Torga welcomes you with his wise words about the simple things of life. The village main street leads to a myriad of narrow and winding roads that you will want to explore. In your trip around the village, you will notice the detailed stone sculptures that appear here and there, only to discover that this is one of the village secrets – its artisans' ability to manually work the stone.



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Proceeding into the mountains, other sites rise in the horizon. The next stop is **Talasnã** – which is without doubt the most famous schist village in the Lousã mountains. Continuing exploring, do not miss the chance to arrive at **Casal Novo**, one of the most genuine villages you will visit, and **walk the nature trails** that will take you to **Chiqueiro**. After this beautiful walk, its time to freshen up – proceed to the Shrine of Senhora da Piedade – were you will find the beautiful **Senhora da Piedade river beach** and the most amazing views over the Lousã Castle.

If you plan to visit in April, you will also have the chance to attend the **festivities of Senhora da Piedade** and the procession up to the shrine.

Overnight in a 4 star hotel /boutique hotel or similar



Day 2 – Aldeia das Dez – Benfeita - Fajão

Today, drive towards east into Serra do Açor, with a first stop at **Aldeia da Dez**. The village has a vast built heritage with special highlight to its **main church**, and is a natural belvedere – at each point you cross you can be marveled by the amazing views of the surrounding mountains. Do not leave without trying the traditional cakes – coscoréis and cavacas and make a stop to try **the Arbutus liqueur and jam**.

Proceed then to **Benfeita**, one of the few *white villages* of the among the schist heritage. And there is much to see in this calm and fresh location. Start by wondering its streets and feeling the breeze provided by the water courses, visit the mill and the still to see how the ancient inhabitants used to take profit from the water power and climb the **Fonte das Moscas** for an overview of the village. At Benfeita, you should also stop at the **Felt shop** to observe the innovative works the local artisans create out of this material.

Leaving Benfeita, its impossible to continue your route without passing through **Mata da Margarça**, one of the most important deciduous forests in the country. And it is here where you will find a wonder of nature – the impressive **Fraga da Pena Waterfalls**.

Don't finish your day before stopping at the village of **Fajão**, a picturesque location that has benefited from requalification works in the early 2000's and is now a well preserved and welcoming site.



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If you are looking for additional adventure, there is also the opportunity of climbing the **Boulders of Fajão** – which stand at 900 meters in height.

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Day 3 – Janeiro de Cima – Janeiro de Baixo

It is time to start exploring the villages that stand on the banks of Zêzere River.

Located on the river left bank, you will come across the charismatic **Janeiro de Cima**, a village that must be wondered without haste. Walk among the schist-built houses, that appear before you in the winding roads and narrow alleys. Take this opportunity to visit the cultural space of **Casa das Tecedeiras**, to discover the secrets of working the linen, learn how to work on an ancient loom and see how the local artisans create modern artworks out of this ancient technique.

Further down the river, the village of **Janeiro de Baixo** rises in the horizon and is the perfect location to spend the afternoon – the river beach with the village landscape on the back creates the perfect atmosphere for a resting time.

Overnight in a 4 star hotel /boutique hotel or similar



Day 4 – Álvaro – Pedrógão Pequeno – Mosteiro

Start by visiting the village of **Álvaro**, which lays along a hillside overlooking the Zêzere River. In the ancient times Álvaro was an important town for several religious orders, including the Order of Malta, which has provided a rich religious patrimony. Take this opportunity to make the **chapels circuit**, to discover the various religious artworks in the village. Before leaving, take a moment to enjoy the river breeze at the Cabril dam.



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Continuing along the Zêzere riverbank, the next stop is **Pedrogão Pequeno**, a small village where you can enjoy the view from the **Senhora da Confiança Hilltop** or taste the traditional fish soup.

Located at a valley and surrounded by a green forest and water courses, **Mosteiro** is a privileged location and it's worth a visit not only of the river beach but also to see the village windmills, the levadas, the olive mills and water courses. These were part of the village infrastructures for many years and are now a touristic attraction.

Overnight in a 4 star hotel /boutique hotel or similar



Day 5 – Martim Branco – Sarzedas - Lisbon

Before returning to Lisbon, you will still have time to visit the last group of the Schist villages – Tejo-Ocreza group. **Martim Branco** is probably the most genuine village you will visit in this tour, as it did not suffer any renovations or major changes throughout the times. Indeed, the village oven is still used by the locals to bake their own bread, which smell can be sensed in every street. Do not leave without visiting the **Casa das Artes e Ofícios**, a building that houses a shop with local products.

The last stop of your tour is the village of **Sarzedas**, the only schist village that received a nobility title and distinguishes itself for the colored traces of the facades. The must see here are the **village fountain**, the town **pillory** or its main **church** and **bell tower**.

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Day 6 – Departure Transfer to Lisbon International Airport



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