

Flora



The Menalva stream runs through a valley, where there is a dense riparian gallery formed by arboreal and shrubby species less common in other parts of the Algarve, such as White Willows (*Salix alba*), Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Poplars (*Populus spp.*), Ericaceous Tree of Madeira (*Viburnum tinus*), along with Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), Tamarisks (*Tamarix africana*), Blackberry thickets (*Rubus ulmifolius*) and Cane-plantations (*Arundo donax*).

The slopes of the valley are covered with Mediterranean vegetation characteristic of the Algarvian Barrocal region, such as the Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), the French Lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*), the Strawberry-tree (*Arbutus unedo*), the Kermes Oak (*Quercus coccifera*), as well as tree species such as the Carob Tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*), the Wild-Olive tree (*Olea europea var. sylvestris*) and the Gum Cistus (*Cistus ladanifer*).

It is also possible to find several species of orchids in certain parts of Fonte Benémola, a plant that is known for its great beauty.



Strawberry-tree (*Arbutus unedo*)



Orchid (*Orchis italica*)

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PROTECTED LANDSCAPE

Fonte Benémola

Querença and Tôr



The Protected Landscape of Fonte Benémola

was created by the Law-Decree no. 142/2008 dated 24th July. It occupies an area of 390 ha and is located within the parishes of Querença and Tôr in the Algarve's Barrocal Region.

The Water



The greatest richness of this protected area is the water. The Menalva stream that crosses the Protected Landscape of Fonte Benémola forms the Algibre stream.

The Menalva stream is supplied by some water-springs, which allow a maintained discharge of about 60% of the stream's course, even during the summer time, like the water-springs "O Olho" and the Benémola spring.

In order to retain the water in certain locations some dams were reconstructed and others were newly constructed to allow the formation of water mirrors.

The stream's water used to be carried by sluices to scoop-wheels and old water mills supplying water for irrigation in the horticulture lands.





Fauna

The vegetation near the stream forms a dense gallery, providing a habitat for many avifaunal species, highlighting the Capped Herons (*Ardea cinerea*), Aigrettes (*Egretta alba*), Water Hens (*Gallinula chloropus*), King-fishers (*Alcedo atthis*), Bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*), Hoopoes (*Upupa epops*), Nightingales (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), Titmice (*Oriolus oriolus*), Jays (*Garrulus glandarius*), Blue Humming-birds (*Cyanopica cyana*), Greenfinches (*Carduelis chloris*), among others.



King-fisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Along the stream in areas with water during the whole year there are some aquatic species such as tortoises (*Emys orbicularis*, *Mauremys leprosa*), fish and other amphibian species: Salamanders, Tritons and frogs.



White egret (*Egretta alba*)

There are also Otters (*Lutra lutra*) in the area but it is only possible to observe the remains of their passage.

There are also two kinds of bats in the protected area, the Schreiber's Bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*), vulnerable specie and the Lesser Moused-Eared Bat (*Myotis blythi*), specie in danger of extinction.



Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Constructed Heritage



The protected area is rich in rural infrastructures connected to water exploitation such as dams, sluices, taking the stream's water to the irrigated fields, scoop-wheels with their buckets and a watermill, which milled wheat.



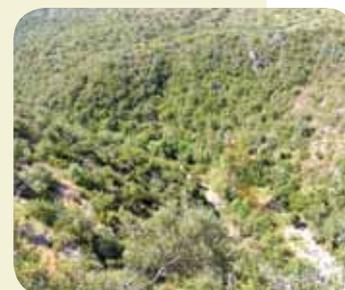
In the protected area there are still some lime-kilns (fragmented) where people put wood and limestone, which were cooked to make lime.



Handicraft



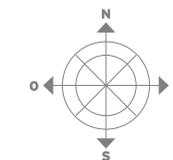
By the stream there is a craftsman working the cane, an abundant raw material found in this area and who makes baskets, cups and other handicraft items that were used in the past at home and in agriculture, which are now appreciated more and more by tourists as well as other occasional visitors.



PROTECTED LANDSCAPE

Fonte Benémola

Querença and Tôr



- A** Beginning of the pedestrian trail "Fonte Benémola"
- B** Lime-kiln
- C** Flora
- D** Barn
- E** Fonte Benémola
- F** Picnic Area
- G** Flora
- H** Handicraft Basket Maker
- I** Beginning of the pedestrian trail "7 Fontes"
- Link to the Via Algarviana (GR 13 - E 4.1)

Boundaries of the protected area

Pedestrian Trail "Fonte Benémola" 4,5 Km

Pedestrian Trail "7 Fontes" 9 Km

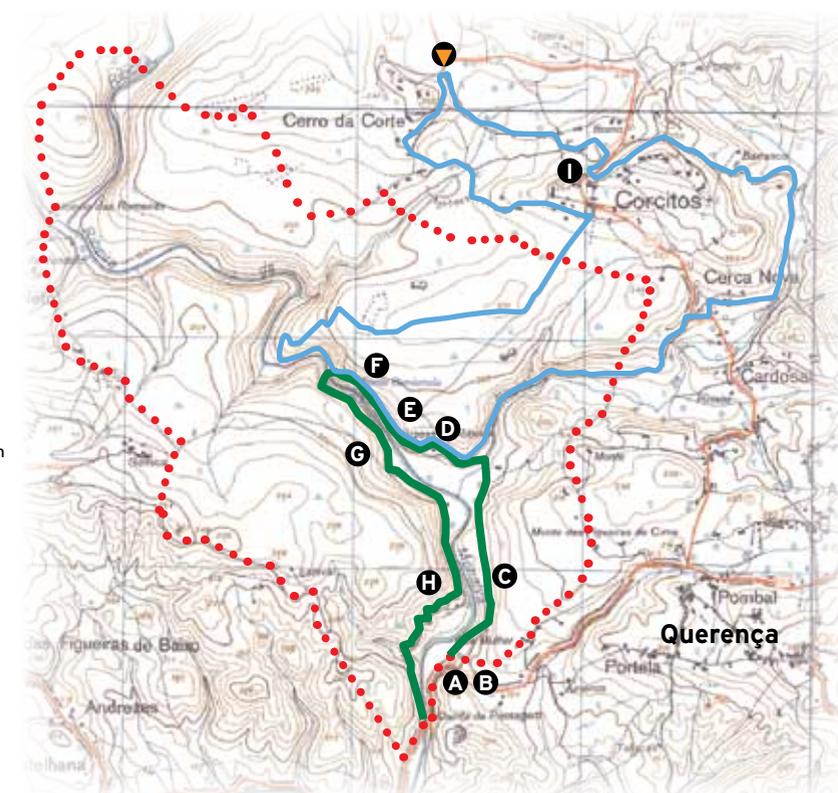
The Pedestrian Trail



In the protected area there is a pedestrian trail marked for the extension of approximately 4,5 km and the directions are marked with yellow and red rectangles. While following the designated trail some care should be taken more specifically, follow only the indicated trails, do not make fires, collect plants or disturb the wild life.

The presence of water throughout the year makes this area ideal for observational nature walks, even in summer. A homologated pedestrian trail crosses this trail called 7 Fontes (7 Fountains) of the Town hall of Loulé

The Via Algarviana (a regional pedestrian trail) passes near the Protected Landscape of Fonte Benémola.



Tôr

