

# Peneda-Gerês National Park

## Unusual and surprising

The Peneda-Gerês National Park was established in 1971 and is Portugal's only national park. It is located 100 km from Porto and extends over 72 000 hectares of truly exceptional natural heritage.

The landscapes of the park alternate between **imposing mountains** and their **waterfalls**, a holly forest and entire fields tinted blue and purple by an endemic species that is the Gerês lily. The **fauna of the park** is very rich, with a little luck and patience you could see a deer (the symbol of the park), the Iberian wolf or garranos (small wild horses).

Besides the observation of animals, there are many other activities in the park. It is possible to do **canyoning, canoeing or hiking**. If you are interested in the last one you will not be disappointed. Following the **Roman road** you will walk among 2000 year old remains, some paths can take you to **dolmens and menhirs sites**. Following some of the routes you may come across huge medieval castles that are more or less well preserved but have not lost their allure. Other ancestral buildings line the routes such as **monasteries or sanctuaries** (sanctuary of Saint Benoit de la porte ouverte).

The villages are numerous in the park and are worth a visit from a historical as well as architectural point of view. For example, there are still **granite villages** dating from the 12th century. In Vilarinho, you will discover an ancient village submerged by the waters. Do not miss either the **villages of Soajo or Peneda**.