



credits: P&L, Luis Duarte



(PT)

SINTRA



381.728



Challenge

The Cultural Landscape of Sintra (part of the Sintra Cascais Natural Park of and UNESCO World Heritage Site) is a major tourist destination in Portugal attracting more than 3.5 million visitors in 2019. However, the site's accessibility to people with disabilities or mobility issues (including elderly people) was challenged by architectural and infrastructural barriers, lack of inclusive information and communication and insufficient staff capacity to address their needs.

The site's large area (approximately 145 km²), heterogeneity and strict conservation rules prevented the development of an easy and standardised solution.



Solution

The site's managing authority (including the municipality of Sintra) involved a multi-disciplinary team including representatives of people with disabilities (hearing and vision impairment) and mobility issues to develop a holistic approach improving the park's accessibility.

The solution addressed three complementary aspects:

- structural interventions to reduce mobility barriers while respecting conservation principles
- adapted information and communication
- training and capacity building activities to reinforce staff's capacity to answer the needs of highly diverse audiences.

With this approach, the site improved cultural participation, in line with European inclusive tourism policies and strategies.

Park of Sintra Welcome Better!



Innovative solutions to balance conservation and accessibility of heritage sites



Quality of interventions on cultural heritage



How ?

- 1 In 2013, the site's managing authority (Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua PSML) set up a multidisciplinary team to supervise and implement the project involving site managers, architects, engineers and accessibility experts, heritage conservation and restoration specialists, key associations representing the main target groups (people with disabilities and mobility issues) active in the territory. The site's managing authority is co-owned by the Municipality of Sintra (15%), the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finance (35%), the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Forestry (35%), the Portuguese Tourism Board (15%).
- 2 PSML engaged with the stakeholders to develop a coherent approach for the site's adaptation strategy. This included three complementary aspects of accessibility: physical access (outdoor and indoor mobility conditions); cognitive access (information and communication); and adapted cultural and educational services. The multidisciplinary team ensured balance between conservation principles and accessibility requirements.
- 3 PSML tested the solutions with target groups, including the app 'Talking Heritage' to facilitate access to the site.
- 4 Local associations trained PSML's staff (managers, employees and volunteers) to better address the needs of people with disabilities (including sign language and braille) and reduced mobility. While the renovation and accessibility project ended in 2016, its outcomes are still implemented.

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Budget/Financing

€ 1.927 million

The overall budget of the project is €1,927,000 over three years: 75% from PSML's own revenue and 25% from the Portuguese Tourism Authority.



Management

- Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua S.A managed the project in close cooperation with other stakeholders present in the territory.
- ACAPO (the Portuguese Association of the Blind and the Partially Sighted); APS (the Portuguese Association of the Deaf); and the Salvador Association (integrating people with physical impairments) played a crucial role to support the municipality and the museum since the beginning of the project to design, develop and test solutions with the target groups (including multimedia guides and audio descriptions, publications in braille, and historical and cultural information in sign language).
- The European Network for Accessible Tourism and Accessible Portugal contributed to the project by linking this initiative with others at national and European levels.



Transferability

- Communicate your accessible features: make visitors aware of the service you can provide!
- Make reversible actions on your heritage site as much as you can: you have the guarantee that future innovative solutions can be applied without damaging the site's aesthetic and architectural characteristics.
- Take on board a multidisciplinary team since the project design, including accessibility experts and associations representing target audience and users.



Impact

- Improved access to culture through adapted offer and services.
- Increased cultural participation through a more welcoming approach and infrastructure for visitors with disabilities and special needs, including elderly people.
- Improved awareness of diversity and inclusion within management and staff of heritage sites
- Increased public awareness and information about people with disabilities' rights.
- Improved balance between quality conservation standards and accessibility.



Links

<https://bit.ly/2ZQKNq5>

Talking Heritage" app: www.talkingheritage.com

Video: <https://bit.ly/2Zslhr0>



credits- PSML-Luis Duarte



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