

## Blue route of Mata Nacional dos Medos (National Forest of Fears)

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Costa da Caparica Fossil Cliff Protected Landscape (CCFSPL). Blue Route. Short Description.

Flora

When planning your visit you should take in consideration the recommendations described in the [Code of Conduct and Good Practices](#) [PDF 1,6 MB] of the visitors on the Protected Areas, as well the helpful advices that will help you to enjoy this visit.

**Starting and arriving point:** Zimbral Picnic Park.

**Length:** 2,2 km.

**Duration:** 2 h.

**Difficulty:** Easy.

**Supports:** Accommodation on Almada and Sesimbra municipalities.



The Blue Route has the same path as the Green Route until you reach the viewpoint, just follow the blue signs for the route (see photo of the sign)

### Short Description

The forest area of Mata dos Medos, located on top of the cliff, was set up by the king D.João V in order to avoid the advance of the sand dunes or “medos” to the inner agricultural lands. With dominance of Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) on the shrub layer, there are still isolated examples of Pine Tree (*Pinus pinaster*) and of the Alepo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*), also known as selfish-pine because the pinecones are always attached to the branches. The shrub layer is rich, with prominence of sabina-das-praias (*Juniperus turbinata*), *Quercus coccifera* (a kind of oak), Mastic tree *Pistacia lentiscus*, arbutus (*Arbutus unedo*), *Rhamnus lycioides* ssp. *oleoides* and the aromatic myrtle *Myrtus communis*.

This route allows, in addition to the direct contact with the forest in a quiet and calm environment, the observation of the dominant plant species : the Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) in a place with centenary specimens.

Under the pine trees, several shrubs can be seen, with emphasis for the “sabina-da-praia” *Juniperus turbinata*. The unusual size of this plant, together with the centenary settlement of pine trees, led to the classification of this forest as a botanical reserve. In a lower stratum you can find the rosemary (*Lavandula luisieri*), the Salvia Cistus (*Cistus salvifolius*) and Santa Cruz Cistus (*Cistus*



*crispus*).



Sabina-das-praias (*Juniperus turbinata*) and Golden Wreath Wattle *Acacia saligna*(® Cristina Girão Vieira).

In this place, there are remains of the area that was affected by the fire of 1978, having been replanted with pine trees two years later.

You will go through an area called "aceiro"(firebreak area) which is a zone without vegetation with the purpose of protecting the forest against the fires.

Here is the highest elevation of the firebreak area, a dune that is part of the ancient dune system, formed about 2000 years ago by prevailing west winds.

At the end of the firebreak area, of the cliff ridge, you can find a viewpoint, from which you can see the coast line up to Sintra, as well as the Costa da Caparica village, the beaches, "Mata das Dunas" with an extensive Acacia, where the invasive species *Acacia saligna* predominates originally from Australia. In the past, several species of *Acacia* (Acácia-de-espigas *A. longifolia*, *A. saligna* and acácia-virilda *A. retinoides*) have been used in plantations on Costa da Caparica coast by the Forestry Services, with the objective of dune fixation and the protection of agricultural lands of the interior.



On the Caparica coastal zone you can see Sintra (® Cristina Girão Vieira).

At this point you can contemplate the fossil cliff, so-called because is no longer bathed by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and therefore no longer functions as a cliff (a high point of the coast). In fact the nickname of "fossil Cliff" has to do with this fact on not with actually having fossils.

Returning to the firebreak area, towards the south, you can find a path that next to the cliff ridge you can reach a second viewpoint in which you can see Cabo Espichel



Coastal zone and Cabo Espichel (© Ana Martins).