



Northern Littoral Natural park

In the coastal strip of the platform of the North Coast National Park is characterized by its natural beauty. The 16 kilometres of coastline hide some of the most beautiful landscapes in Portugal, worth photographing or painting thus retaining the image in time.

This protected area was established in November 1987, earned requalification for Natural Park in July 2005. The defence of the coastal area, the control of the urbanism and preservation of natural values are important factors in their ranking, and this area is also included in the site "North Coast" Natura 2000. The Natural Park appears as a means of reconciling sustainable development and conservation of natural resources, this is not intended to prohibit the use of this territory, but rather to establish the rules and mechanisms for its proper use.

Between the mouth of Neiva and Apúlia, the coastline consists of a string of beaches and dunes that are associated, reefs, estuaries of small rivers Cávado and Neiva, patches of pine forest, a countryside dotted with villages and many area recent urbanization.

The beaches of the north now alternate between the pebbles (ancient marine terraces) and the sands that make us reflect on the progress of the sea and the importance of dunes as a protective barrier. The beaches of the south still retain long sandy areas so attractive for tourism and that made a tourist resort of Ofir reference. On the beaches of Apúlia the seaweed became a symbol of agro-maritime chores as the manure from the land came from the sea, in a scenario where the fields themselves were made of sand from the sea with the smell of sea air in the trough of beautiful forms.

The North Coast is also recognized by large areas of dunes, home to plant and animal species and also an important element of protection against water and wind and interior habitats. The dunes are particularly developed in the northern (Antas and Belinho) and south (Fão and Apúlia). This habitat has unique features because of the extremely difficult and harsh conditions, where there are very unique species such as Reversal (*Ammophila arenaria*), sea euca (*Cakil sea*), among others.

Beyond the dunes there is a significant area of pine forest where you find the pine (*Pinus pinaster*) and pine (*Pinus pinea*). Also there are small areas of riparian forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and oak forest where you can find species such as oak (*Quercus robur*), cork oak (*Quercus suber*), bay (*Laurus nobilis*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) or hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

One of the particularities of this park is its natural marine area. In a total surface area of 8887 ha, the marine area covers 7653 ha. The cold Atlantic waters associated with a bedrock outcrops that may exceed 18 m, are some of the ecological factors to the great biodiversity that exists in this habitat.

With a strong link with the marine area, the estuary of the river Cávado and the small estuary of the river Neiva are of considerable importance. Its rich landscape associated with a diversity of flora and fauna, breeding grounds and "nurseries" for many species, makes estuaries harboring some of the most significant habitats.

PNLN (*Parque Natural do Litoral Norte*)
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