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# Peneda-Gerês National Park - Forest Functions

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Location of the Park

## About the Park:

Located in the northwest of Portugal, specifically in the districts of Viana do Castelo, Braga, and Vila Real, the Peneda-Gerês National Park is the only protected area with representative samples of natural and humanized landscapes, biodiversity elements and geological sites of scientific, ecological and educational value to be classified as a national park in Portugal.

Although the first signs of human presence date from 6000 BC, Gerês has still preserved its natural characteristics over the centuries. Due to this fact, in 1971 the Portuguese Government created the Peneda-Gerês National Park, 697 square kilometers of protected area in order to preserve the region natural value in harmony with the inhabitants' lives and their economical activities.



Park's logo



Stags - a village in the Park



Park's map



## Environmental Functions:

The forest environmental functions are related to the existent types of forests in the area and the characteristic and endemic species that live there.

In the park oak forests, which are a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees of **Pyrenean** (*Quercus pyrenaica*) and **English oaks** (*Quercus robur*), one can find emblematic flora species such as the **Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*) and the **Early-purple Orchid** (*Orchis mascula*). The park oak forests also hold some fauna species like the **Snub-nosed Viper** (*Vipera latastei*), the **Seoane viper** (*Vipera seoanei*), the **Iberian mountain goat** (*Capra pyrenaica*), the **Iberian Wolf** (*Canis lupus signatus*) and the park representative specie - the **Buck** (*Capreolus capreolus*). "Mata da Albergaria" is the most important oak forest in the park.

**Riparian forests** correspond to forested or wooded areas of land bordering rivers or lakes. The flora species that stand out there are the **Yew** (*Taxus baccata*), **Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*), **Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and **Gerês fern** (*Woodwardia radicans*). Gerês riparian forests also support important fauna species like the **Otter** (*Lutra lutra*), the **Lusitanian Salamander** (*Chioglossa lusitana*) and the **Iberian Emerald Lizard** (*Lacerta schreiberi*).



Lusitanian Salamander

Iberian Emerald Lizard

Gerês Fern

235 species total the amount of vertebrates, which is very representative of the diversity of this group in the park. Of the total, 204 are protected at national and international conventions and, by specific legislation, 71 belong to the list of threatened species.

In what concerns invertebrates, there are two species of *Euphydryas aurinia* and *Callimorpha quadripunctata* butterflies, a *Lucanus cervus* beetle and the *Kerry Slug* (*Geomalac maculosus*) stand out for its importance in terms of biodiversity conservation.



Gerês riparian forest

## Economic Functions:

In Peneda-Gerês, there are some activities in development in spite of the fact it is a national protected area.

A few aspects determine the dominance of the primary sector, such as the high number of elderly women, the long distance from economic centers and the fact of the region consisting in villages and small towns,

The park's main activities are **agriculture, livestock, hydro-electrical generation, exploration of forestry for saw-milling, and tourism**, this one being concentrated in Caldas do Gerês.

Most of the economic activities developed in the region, including the forestal ones, consist on small **family businesses to provide for the locals, with an insignificant impact on the economy**.



Exploration of forestry

Rural tourism

Livestock

## Social Functions:

The social benefits of the park's forests go beyond tourism recreation. In Gerês, people maintain a rural way of life, and subsistence activities and keep employed in the forest exploration and protection sector.

The forest most important social functions however are related to the protection of people, lands, buildings and structures against landslides and stone avalanches in the mountainous territory of Gerês. It is relevant that the forests are able to retain and store excess water and counteract water contamination acting as an excellent natural filter by accumulating all civilization waste produced by the villages around, absorbing impurities and releasing pure water to the environment.



Landslide

Walking

Picnic area