

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Serra and Town of Sintra
<i>Location</i>	Sintra/Serra
<i>State Party</i>	Portugal
<i>Date</i>	

Justification by State Party

The nomination of a cultural landscape to the World Heritage List requires an exceptional mixture of natural and cultural sites within a distinct framework. The Serra de Sintra conforms convincingly with this requirement. Seen from a distance (or in an aerial photograph) it gives the impression of an essentially natural landscape that is distinct from its surroundings: a small chain of forested granite mountains rising over the hilly rural landscape between Lisbon and the coast. When seen from closer at hand, the Serra reveals surprisingly rich cultural evidence spanning several centuries of Portugal's history.

This history stems from the old town of Sintra, which was selected as the site of a medieval royal palace for its specific climatic location in the country (and even the whole Mediterranean region) with cool summers and mild, sunny winters. The royal court and the country's aristocrats established themselves in Sintra and the northern slopes of the Serra, where they eventually built sumptuous villas and *quintas* (country houses) surrounded by artistically designed gardens and parks with luxuriant flora. The solitude of the Serra and its forests also attracted monks and hermits, who enriched it with monasteries and hermitages and introduced a religious-cultural element.

This extraordinary development of the Sintra landscape reached its height during the reign of King Ferdinand II of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dynasty (1836-85). This artist-monarch was very attached to Sintra and its landscape, for which he had a deep affection, and to which he brought romanticism in a splendid form that was unique in the Mediterranean region. He bought the Pena monastery, situated on a steep mountainside and converted it into a fabulous, magical palace, giving it the greatest dimension that a Romantic with wide artistic vision and great aesthetic sensitivity could dream of. In this he anticipated the famous castle of Neuschwanstein built by Ludwig II of Bavaria. Moreover, Ferdinand surrounded the palace with a vast Romantic park planted with rare and exotic trees, decorated with fountains, watercourses and series of ponds, cottages, chapels, and mock ruins and traversed by magical paths without parallel elsewhere. The king was also assiduous in restoring the forests of the Serra, where thousands of trees were planted to supplement the oaks and umbrella pines which made a perfect contribution to the romantic character of the Serra.

In this way a cultural landscape of high and unique quality developed in the Serra de Sintra. From the natural point of view it brought Mediterranean and northern flowers together with hundreds of trees and exotic flowers within unique gardens, parks, and forests. In cultural terms, all three categories of World Heritage cultural landscape are represented in distinct areas:

- 1 The group of villas and *quintas* with their gardens and parks correspond with the "clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man" through landscape design.
- 2 This landscape is framed within a continuing organically evolved landscape, which has been sustained by painstaking restoration and presentation projects. The historic centre of Sintra forms part of this landscape.
- 3 The northern slopes of the Serra with their extensive forests of umbrella pines, Mexican cypress, and Australian acacias and eucalyptus, with its crests and piles of granite rocks covering archaeological remains, and the ancient monasteries and hermitages form an associative landscape which, in its turn, gives its special magnificence and sublime character to the whole region.

Sintra and the Serra are truly unique. They are certainly very beautiful, but above all they are unique. It is this quality on which the fame of Sintra, its international renown among poets, artists, and thinkers, is based. Its distinctive character rests on the successful syncretism between nature and ancient monuments, and on the pioneer character of the architectural dreams that they have inspired, notably in the context of Romanticism.

No other site in Portugal is like Sintra. It is difficult to find an exact parallel anywhere in Europe, or even the world, because of its complexity and the characteristic symbiosis between the natural and the built heritage. There are some areas of central Europe with superb Romantic palaces surrounded by magnificent gardens, dating from the 1860s. It must be borne in mind, however, that the Pena Palace in Sintra, the prototype of European Romanticism and distinguished by its exuberant mixture of styles and its exotic and medieval echoes, is at least a quarter of a century earlier than anything comparable in Germany. Over and above the immense natural landscape that surrounds it, it is also situated within a park that is unique of its type, composed of thousands of trees brought together from the four corners of the world, a phenomenon that is also to be found in the Park of Montserrat.

Category of property

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this nomination constitutes a *site*.

History and Description

History

Its favourable climate, fertile soil, and proximity to the River Tagus have attracted human settlement in this area from early times. There are archaeological sites in the area dating from the early Neolithic (5th millennium BC), Neolithic-Chalcolithic transition (3rd millennium BC), Beaker (3rd-2nd millennium BC), Bronze Age (15th-6th centuries BC), and Iron Age (4th-2nd centuries BC).

The Roman occupation began in the mid-2nd century BC, when the area formed part of the *territorium* of the Roman town of Olisipo (modern Lisbon). The local inhabitants embraced the Roman way of life with enthusiasm, and there are indications that there was a Roman settlement on the site of the modern town of Sintra. In the late Roman and Byzantine period, archaeological discoveries demonstrate commercial links with North Africa.

The first written references to the settlement of Sintra date from the period of Moorish occupation, when it is described as being a dependency of Lisbon. Others qualify it as the most important centre in the region after Lisbon. The town and its castle were devastated several times during the Reconquest. It was first liberated by Alfonso VI of León in 1093, but recaptured by the Moors two years later. Sintra finally yielded to King Afonso Henriques after the conquest of Lisbon in 1147, and seven years later was awarded its charter as a *concelho* (commune). The territory covered by the charter was very large, and was divided into four parishes. The inhabitants of the early town were of several races, but they quickly lost their individual identities to become *saloios*, the term used to describe the mixed-race population in the towns around Lisbon.

After the suppression of the Templars in 1181 the lands granted to them by Afonso Henriques passed to the Order of Christ, which replaced them in Portugal. During the crisis of 1383-85 Sintra was one of the last towns to yield to João I, and as a result it was deprived of the Queen's House, which had been granted to it by King Dinis. Afonso built an imposing Royal Palace there which served as the Royal summer residence until the late 16th century.

In the late 15th century Sintra was closely associated with one of the greatest queens of Portugal, Leonor, widow of João II, the "Perfect Prince". However, it was under the patronage of Manuel I that the town became indissolubly linked with the Crown: he caused the Royal Palace to be substantially enlarged and founded the Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Penha, from which he watched the return of Vasco de Gama from his historic voyage. Succeeding monarchs spent much time in the town, and legend has it that King Sebastião listened to Camões reading his great epic poem *Os Lusíadas* there.

After the Restoration of 1640 Sintra lost this link and the Royal Palace served only as a prison for Afonso VI. This neglect lasted until the early 19th century, when the town began to attract the Portuguese upper classes, following the distinguished foreigners who had begun to visit it. It was not until the middle of the century that Fernando II, consort of Maria II, inspired by Romanticism, converted the ruined Hieronymite monastery into a fine palace, which brought many wealthy foreign people to the area.

The artistic and historic qualities of the town and its surroundings were properly appreciated and jealously protected in the ensuing decades. In the past decade a vigorous cultural policy has been developed for the study and presentation of the area's historical heritage.

Description

- Geomorphological formation

The Serra, located on the western coast of Portugal, consists of a narrow mountainous strip that extends from the Cabo de Roca to near Lisbon. It was formed during the Cretaceous and is volcanic in origin, hence the granites and other rocks of the region. It stands out from the relatively flat surrounding landscape, its highest point being the Cruz Alta (528 m).

The cultivated areas are mostly formed from calcareous Jurassic rocks, whilst the coastal strip is mainly Cretaceous sandstone, favouring the growth of pine woods. Further north pockets of Pleistocene and Holocene sediments alternate with dunes and aeolian sands. These are related to orographic as well as climatic factors: Sintra's climate is directly conditioned by its proximity to the Atlantic and by the barrier formed by the Serra. Solar radiation diminishes as the coast approaches, as does temperature and the rainfall.

Although there are slight local variations, the geographical characteristics of Sintra determine the three ecological areas relevant to the cultural landscape: first, an area of pine wood; second, natural forest made up of various species (notably oak, pine, and chestnut); and, thirdly, an area colonized by the forest tree species plus olives.

- Cultural landscape

The ensemble of gardens, parks, and monuments that make up the Serra and the town of Sintra constitute a cultural landscape that can easily be differentiated from its immediate surroundings. Its cool summers and mild, sunny winters provide the perfect setting for the acclimatization of exotic flora which enhance the unique charm of the place.

The "Sacred Mountains" of Varro and Columela and Ptolemy's "Mountain of the Moon" enclose various significant manmade parks and gardens. The Parque de Pena has more than 65 different conifers and nearly a hundred dicotyledons, whilst the Parque de Montserrat is host to more than three thousand botanical species. Because of its exotic vegetation Montserrat is now one of the most important Victorian gardens. Scattered through the area, attached to palaces, castles, or *quintas* is a series of small gardens of great aesthetic value. The entire complex is embraced by a park stretching to the horizon.

Alongside the indigenous vegetation there are many exotic species that have succeeded in acclimatizing. Everywhere there are the remains of earlier human settlements of all periods from the Neolithic to recent times., the living proof of an intermingling of cultures. There are some startling contrasts: the Convento dos Capuchos, with monastic asceticism at its most extreme, lies close to the most sophisticated residences of the court.

As a landscape *designed and created intentionally by man* for cultural and aesthetic reasons, the whole ensemble fits into the first category of cultural landscapes (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, WHC/2/Revised February 1994, para 39). It also corresponds with the second category as it is an evolutive landscape which has changed over time, adapting to the different human settlements that have succeeded one another while maintaining an active role in society.

- Most significant parks and gardens

Work on the *Parque de Pena* was begun by Ferdinand II around 1840. Many species were brought from North America, Asia, and New Zealand. The whole park covers 210 ha, including the Tapada do Mocho and the Moorish

Castle; it is enclosed by a stone wall. The higher ground is covered with oak, cypress, and pine woodland, but nearer the castle there are more classical gardens, with parterres and some remarkable specimens of *Taxus baccata* and *Sequoia sempervirens*. Among the most notable features of these gardens are the Garden of the Camellias (camellias, azaleas, and rhododendrons) and the "English Garden" with its unique specimens of *Cycas*, and the garden of the Feiteira de la Condessa with its remarkable dendrological variety.

The *Parque de Montserrat* covers 50 ha on the northern slopes of the Serra. William Beckford's remodelling of the existing palace in the late 18th century involved the creation of a landscape garden. When he took over Sir Francis Cook employed James Burt to design various sites for exotic gardens. The planned gardens are surrounded by a semi-natural oak forest.

- Built heritage

1 Court and military buildings

The *Royal Palace* is undoubtedly the dominant architectural feature of Sintra, situated in the centre of the town. Probably constructed on the site of the Moorish Alcazar of Sintra, its buildings result from two main periods, the early 15th century and the early 16th century. One of the most important features of the Palace is the facing with tiles (*azulejos*), the finest example of this Mudéjar technique on the Iberian Peninsula. Records indicate that Moslem artisans were used during construction work. The interior contains much painted and tiled decoration and other features characteristic of the Mudéjar and late Gothic Manueline styles.

The *Pena Palace*, high on a peak in the Serra, is a work of pure Romanticism, designed by the Portuguese architect Possidónio da Silva. Fernando II's conversion of the medieval monastery, which was abandoned after the 1755 earthquake reduced it to ruins, is eclectic in its use of Egyptian, Moorish, Gothic, and Renaissance elements to produce an ensemble that is a pure expression of the Romantic Movement. Within the 19th century Palace are the church, cloister, and refectory of the 16th century monastery, richly decorated with *azulejos*.

The *Palace of Montserrat* was designed for Sir Francis Cook by the distinguished British architect, James Knowles junior. Again, it is an example of mid-19th century eclecticism, adapted to the remains of the earlier building, also ruined in the 1755 earthquake. It combines neo-Gothicism with substantial elements derived from the architecture of India. Montserrat is renowned for its gardens, largely the work of Thomas Gargill: careful analysis of the microclimatic zones of the land made it possible to plant over 3000 exotic species, collected from all parts of the world.

The earliest structure on the site of the *Quinta da Penha Verde* was built by the great 16th century Portuguese captain and viceroy, João de Castro and enlarged by his heirs and successors. The ensemble is somewhat austere but has a harmony of its own, with a series of chapels dating from the 16th-18th centuries.

The *Palace of Ribafrias*, with its chapel, is in the centre of the town and was built in 1514 by the Royal Great Chamberlain, Gaspar Gonçalves. Its original rather severe lines have been softened by subsequent alterations, such as the insertion of Manueline and Pombaline windows into the facade.

The *Moorish Castle*, high on a peak of the Serra, may be of Visigothic origin; it was certainly being used in the 9th century, during the Moorish occupation. It was finally abandoned with the successful Reconquest of Portugal from the Moors. Now in ruins, the remains of its barbican, keep, and walls vividly illustrate the problems of constructing a fortress on a rocky outcrop of this kind.

Other buildings in this group are the *Palace of Seteais* (late 18th/early 19th Century), the *Quinta de Regaleira* (late 17th century), and the *Town Hall* (early 20th century).

2 Religious architecture

The *Trinity Convent of the Arrabalde* was founded by a group of monks from the Trinity Convent in Lisbon in 1374 in a quiet valley of the Serra. Their primitive hermitage was replaced by the first monastery in 1400 and reconstructed a century later. Following severe damage in the 1755 earthquake, much of it had to be rebuilt. The present small cloister dates from 1570 and the church largely from the later 18th century. It has retained the tranquillity that attracted the first monastic community to this site.

The *Church of Santa Maria*, with its three naves, represents the transition between Romanesque and Gothic of the mid 12th century. The facade and tower are from 1757.

Other churches in the town are the *São Martinho and São Miguel parish churches* (mainly post-1755), the former *São Pedro de Canaferrim parish church* inside the Moorish Castle (12th century), and the *Church of Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia* (17th-18th centuries).

3 Archaeological sites

Excavations have revealed the existence of Neolithic settlements on the site of the Moorish Castle and in the town, a Chalcolithic settlement on the summit of the Penha Verde peak in the Serra, Bronze Age settlements at the Moorish Castle, on the Monte do Sereno, and in the town, an Iron Age settlement in the Serra, and Roman remains in and around the town.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Ownership of the monuments and sites within the designated area is spread among government bodies (notably the Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico - IPPAR), the Municipality of Sintra, the Roman Catholic Church, and private foundations and individuals.

The Parque da Pena and the Parque de Montserrate belong at the present time to the Institute for the Conservation of Nature, General Secretariat of the Environment, and to the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. The environmental forest belongs to the Forestry Administration of Sintra and to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

A number of the buildings are designated National Monuments, under the Decree-Law of 16 June 1910: these include the Royal Palace, the Pena Palace, the Quinta da Penha Verde, the Moorish Castle, and the Parish Church of Santa Maria. Several others are designated Buildings of Public Interest. The other churches and many buildings are designated as Buildings of Municipal Value.

Management

Individual owners (including Government bodies such as the Sintra Forest Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) have complete responsibility for the management of undesignated sites and buildings. In the case of designated sites and monuments, IPPAR and the Municipality have a supervisory function (or direct, where they are owners).

Four organizations have management and conservation plans in the nominated area. The Municipality of Sintra has a Plan for the renovation and safeguard of the historic centre of the town, which has been in operation for several years. This includes control over infrastructural work and conservation, through its Divisions of Culture and of Historic Centre Renewal.

The IPPAR is responsible for conservation programmes at National Monuments and Buildings of Public Interest, and also for control over works in the buffer zones defined for each.

The Sintra Forest Administration is largely concerned with the maintenance of the forest under its control, but this includes work around three monuments (Pena, Montserrate, and the Moorish Castle).

The official Cabinet for the Protected Area Zone of Sintra/Cascais are orientated towards control over unsuitable activities (quarrying, inappropriate construction projects, undesirable demolitions) in this wider area.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The parks, gardens, and forest have been seriously damaged through neglect, abandonment, and even fires. Wrong maintenance policies have resulted in the invasion of strong and hardy plants (pittosporum, eucalyptus, acacias, etc) to the detriment of existing species of greater value. The new plantations that have been made following exclusively forestry guidelines, ignoring existing patterns and paths and even closing perspectives from earlier designs. A thorough historical and evolutionary analysis must be undertaken if this complex landscape is to be rehabilitated.

The humidity of the microclimate of Sintra, combined with the strong northwest winds from the sea, make the buildings of the area susceptible to continuous deterioration. As a result they are the objects of continuous maintenance campaigns on the part of IPPAR and the municipal authorities, where appropriate. The nature of the private buildings and the status of their owners, means that they, too, are regularly repaired and maintained.

Authenticity

The original design can still be traced in the most important parks, Pena and Montserrate, and in some of the smaller gardens included in this ensemble. The major landmarks such as the Castillo de Pena, the Moorish Castle, the Church of São Pedro, Penha Verde, the Cruz Alta, and Palace of Setais, etc, that interact with one another and the landscape have been restored earlier and have an authentic *raison d'être*. The romantic atmosphere, strengthened over time, and the reminders of the Victorian period, as well as the exotic allusions, are still potent and can be easily recognized throughout the landscape.

Many of the buildings within the nominated area have undergone many transformations since their original foundation, notably after the catastrophic 1755 earthquake. Others were the objects of 19th century Romantic reconstruction (which has its own historicity). The social status of the area and its inhabitants is such that regular repair and maintenance is a *sine qua non*.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

The former President of the ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Gardens visited Sintra in January 1995 for a mission of evaluation.

Qualities

The cultural landscape of Sintra, with its Serra, is an extraordinary and unique complex of parks, gardens, palaces, country houses, monasteries, and castles, which creates a popular and cultural architecture that harmonizes with the exotic and overgrown vegetation, creating micro-landscapes of exotic and luxuriant beauty. This amalgamation of exotic styles changes the landscape into an abundant world which offers surprises at every turn in the path, leading the visitor on to another discovery. Its uniqueness, its botanical richness, presented to the visitor with great accuracy, and its charming environment make it unique among landscapes.

Comparative analysis

The uniqueness of Sintra resides in the fact that, even though magnificent royal residences in the Romantic style are often to be found in 19th and 20th century Europe, it is a pioneer work of European romanticism, bringing together its incredible botanical richness and a diversity of monuments and buildings from a long period of history. It has successfully preserved its original characteristics to the present day.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

ICOMOS understands that a new management plan is currently being prepared for the entire area covered by the nomination. Whilst not wishing to make this a condition for inscription on the List, ICOMOS would welcome the opportunity to study this plan in detail.

The planting regimes used by the forestry authorities (see "Conservation history," above) are not considered to be in the best interests of the outstanding cultural landscape that this nomination presents. Any management and/or conservation plan must therefore ensure that future planting should be on the basis of historical ecology rather than current forestry programmes, which are inappropriate in this case.

The title of the nominated property, "the Serra and Town of Sintra," is accurate but does not best express the cultural value of the property, and especially its significance as a cultural landscape. ICOMOS therefore recommends that the State Party be invited to change the name of the nominated property to "The cultural landscape of Sintra."

Recommendation

ICOMOS recommends that this property be inscribed on the List on the basis of *criteria ii, iv, and v*.

The cultural landscape of the Serra and the town of Sintra represents a pioneering approach to Romantic landscaping which had an outstanding influence on developments elsewhere in Europe. It is an unique example of the cultural occupation of a specific location that has maintained its essential integrity as the representation of diverse successive cultures. Its structures harmonize indigenous flora with a refined and cultivated landscape created by man as a result of literary and artistic influences. Its integrity is fragile and vulnerable to neglect and unsympathetic management and use.

ICOMOS, September 1995