

# Historic gardens: heritage and tourism<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

The cultural and landscape heritage connected to the historic gardens set up a strategic tourist resource of the territories and, not rare times, incorporates elements of identity and image of them, particularly of the cities, constituting therefore, important cultural and historical documents in the preservation and strengthening of a society cultural memory and collective identity, as well as tourist attractions in themselves and in their own right with well-known examples from all over the world. With the methodological matrix a depth review of the scientific literature and the main international guiding and normative documents, we intend to reflect about the course of the historic garden, from the patrimonial dimension institutionalized within the framework of some documents and actions, to the importance it has acquired as a touristic and recreational resource and product with a huge potential to know and explore, analyzed under a national and international perspective.

As main conclusions we refer the relevance of the garden tourism in countries such as France and the United Kingdom, as well as the potential of this niche for the tourist activity in Portugal.

**Keywords:** Historical/Cultural Heritage. Historic Gardens. Garden Tourism.

## Resumo:

*Jardins históricos: património e turismo.*

O património cultural e paisagístico ligado aos jardins históricos configura um recurso turístico estratégico dos territórios e, não raras as vezes, incorpora elementos da identidade e imagem dos mesmos, nomeadamente das cidades, constituindo por isso, documentos culturais e históricos fundamentais na preservação e fortalecimento da memória cultural e da identidade coletiva de uma sociedade, assim como atrações turísticas por si só e por direito próprio com exemplos bem conhecidos por todo o Mundo.

Tendo como matriz metodológica uma revisão aprofundada da literatura científica e dos principais documentos orientadores e normativos internacionais de referência, pretende-se reflectir sobre o percurso do jardim histórico, desde a dimensão patrimonial institucionalizada no quadro de documentos e acções, à importância que tem adquirido como recurso turístico/lúdico com potencialidades por conhecer e explorar, analisada sob uma perspectiva nacional e internacional. Como principais conclusões referem-se a relevância do turismo de jardins em países como, por exemplo, a França e o Reino Unido, bem como o potencial deste nicho para a atividade turística em Portugal.

**Palavras-chave:** Património Histórico/Cultural. Jardins Históricos. Turismo de Jardins.

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## 1. The long way to the historic garden's recognition of its patrimonial dimension

The second half of the XX century point out the extension of the heritage concept to other dimensions besides the built monument, motivated, among others, for the growing interest in landscapes, natural monuments and sites, where we can include parks and gardens.

Transverse to the different civilizations and societies, the gardens have become into cultural and historical documents of great importance that transcend time and culture, “ (...) El jardín, reflejo de la cultura y de la historia de um Pueblo, es una de las más hermosas formas de acercarse a este patrimonio vivo de nuestro passado y nuestra conciencia humana” (AÑÓN, 1993:25), essential to the preservation and strengthening of cultural memory and collective identity of a society (ANDRADE, 2008) and is therefore one of the richest expressions and the most delicate of the cultural and landscape heritage (ESTADÃO, 2006).

The gardens and your style reflect the characteristics of their periods of formation and development (SIMKOVIĆ, 1977), as well as personal and political powers and many times are stages for different perspectives and artistic creations (SOUSA VITERBO, 1906; CARITA e CARDOSO, 1987). About that PECHÈRE (1971) said “les Jardins ont toujours été l’expression d’un grand raffinement, sans doute parce qu’ils sont une synthèse de différent arts”.

For all these reasons there was a perception that it was necessary and urgent to know, preserve, safeguard, protect and valorize this heritage. This context led gardens experience changes and opportunities. In spite of the interest in gardens has emerged during the Universal and International Exhibitions, which occurred before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, it was in particular since the late 60’s with the establishment by the IFLA of a Section addressed to the gardens of historic interest, and the founding of the International Committee of Historic Gardens and Sites, in the beginning of the 70’s, considered as a mark in all this process, that interest became more effective (PECHÈRE, 1971; PECHÈRE, 1987; AÑÓN, 1993, LUMMEN, 2001). In subsequent years several conferences, symposia and studies formalized the importance of its preservation achieved in 1981 with the publication of the Florence Charter, as an addendum to the Venice Charter covering the specific field concerned. This document celebrates the historic garden as a “living monument” (article 3) and consider it as a testimony of a culture, a style, an age, and the originality of a creative artist, the garden is also seen as a place of enjoyment, meditation and repose (article 5). This normative framework established a new direction and a specific protection for gardens, being since then, the main document guiding the actions perpetrated by all countries relative to historic gardens (ICOMOS, 1982).

About the issue of safeguard and valorization through the tourism of the historical gardens, we can give some examples of international good practices towards the gardens as France, Ireland or UK.

In UK, considered the “*nation of garden lovers*”, the implementation, in 1984, of the “National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England” allowed to know the existing gardens through registration, which joins the long work developed by some Institutions/Organizations as the National Trust or the National Garden Scheme, and the implementation of the policies *National Lottery* and *European Union’s Objective One* that also allowed to obtain funds to finance the most important botanical gardens and capture investments addressed to economically depressed regions. The most emblematic projects were

the Eden Project (Cornwall) and the Alnwick Garden (Northumberland), new attractions that increased the regions visitors and contributed to the economic and touristic development of those rural areas (MINTER, 2004; SHARPLEY, 2007).

In France, for example, some institutions was created which objectives are the knowledge, protection, maintenance, restoration, promotion, creation and valorization of parks and gardens of France as the *Comité des Parcs et Jardins de France* (CPJF) in 1990, the *Conseil National des Parcs et Jardins* (CNPJ) in 2003 and in 2008 the *Fondation des de Parcs et Jardins de France*; was instituted the “*Politique en faveur des parcs et jardins*” with some actions as the annual event *Rendez-vous aux jardins* or the label *Jardin Remarquable* and in the French Heritage Code there are the possibility the gardens can be considered as *Monument Historique* (Historical Monument) (MCC, 2012).

In Ireland, in the 90’s, was developed the “The Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Programme” (£4 million to restore 30 gardens) with results in the increase of the gardens open to the public (more than 130 gardens) and the garden visitors (368 thousands in 1989 to 574 thousands in 2000 and almost 1,3 million in 2007) (GORMAN, 1999; NISR, 2011). This Program is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

### 1.1. The case of Portugal

In the Portuguese context, the historic gardens never constituted a specific concern to the legislative level. The first concerns about gardens appeared particularly in the academic field, especially with Sousa Viterbo, Caldeira-Cabral or Ilídio Araújo, although date from the first decades of the XX century some protectionist measures relating to notable trees that nowadays considers, to classification, not only specific trees but also the sets of trees and gardens of botanical, historical, natural or artistic interest. The “Portuguese Heritage Law” (*Lei do Património Cultural Português*) recognizes the gardens and parks while important elements of the consistency of monuments, ensembles and sites that integrate it and because of that susceptible of recovering and valorative measures.

Only recently, in the 90s of the twentieth century begin notice some signs of change about the preservation of the Portuguese historic gardens. There were two important inventories. In the first one, integrated in the Architectural Heritage Inventory (IPA), were registered about 300 gardens, parks, tapadas and cercas. In the second one, was taken into account the touristic potential of historic gardens and were registered about 120 gardens (CASTEL-BRANCO *et al.*, 2002). The real consequences for the tourism of this last inventory remain unknown.

About the classification, a decisive process in the cultural heritage protection and preservation, in the IGESPAR we found more than 100 references to gardens and other constructions and monuments with gardens (classified and about to be classified), distributed by the typologies Civil Architecture, Religious Architecture and also a case that is inserted into the typology Not Defined.

The typology Civil Architecture have the most classified gardens, included not only in the Garden category, but also in the Home, Palace, Park, Solar categories, among others. There are just a few gardens classified in the Garden category - Manga Garden (Coimbra) and the Botanical Garden of Lisbon as a National Monument and the Botanical Garden of Coimbra as a Public Interest Property (Table I).

Table I

Gardens classified and being classified in Portugal in the typology Civil Architecture

CATEGORIES	TYPE OF PROTECTION
Civil Architecture Typology	
Área Urbana (1)	1 (IIP)
Biblioteca (1)	1 (VC)
Casal (1)	1 (1ºIIP/MN)
Cerca (1)	1 (IIP)
Casa (1)	13 (IIP); 3 (IM); 5 (VC)
Conjunto (5)	1 (IIP); 4 (VC)
Conjunto Urbano (1)	1 (VC)
Edifício (7)	3 (IIP); 1 (IM); 1 (MIP); 2 (VC)
Escola (1)	1 (VC)
Jardim (3)	2 (MN); 1 (IIP)
Museu (1)	1 (MN)
Paço (2)	2 (IIP)
Palacete (4)	1 (MN); 1 (IIP); 1 (IM); 1 (VC)
Palácio (18)	5 (MN); 1 (MIP); 10 (IIP); 2 (VC)
Parque (3)	1 (IIP); 1 (IM); 1 (VC)
Quinta (16)	9 (IIP); 1 (IM); 1 (SIP); 5 (VC)
Solar (7)	4 (IIP); 1 (IM); 2 (VC)
Tapada (1)	1 (IIP)
TOTAL: 94	10 MN; 2 MIP; 48 IIP; 8 IM; 1 SIP; 25 VC

Source: Elaborated from IGESPAR (Actualized October 2012).

Legend: MN - Monumento Nacional, MIP - Monumento de Interesse Público, IIP - Imóvel de Interesse Público, IM - Interesse Municipal, SIP - Sítio de Interesse Público, VC - Em Vias de Classificação.

Related to the conservation and valorization, Portugal have the “Portuguese Association of Gardens and Historical Sites” founded in 2003, that has as main objectives: the study, defense, preservation and promotion of the landscape heritage and to promote the conservation and valorization of the natural and historical sites, private and public.

This institution has more than 70 historic gardens associated and made 2 applications to the European Project EEA Grants: in 2006 the “Restoration of gardens’ hydraulic systems, walls and trails” and in 2008 the “Development of Historic Gardens as Tourist Products - devising and implementing of Garden Circuits in Portugal”. About the first application, we have already the results: 12 gardens were covered, with a total of investment more than 1 million (1.084.324€), which 60% (650.594€) came from the EEA Grants. The Palácio da Fronteira Garden was the biggest beneficiary of this intervention with 21% of the total investment (Table II).

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Table II

Distribution of investment by gardens

Garden	Location	Investment €	%
Palácio da Fronteira	Lisboa	197.193,95	21,1
Convento do Bom Sucesso	Lisboa	23.416,00	2,5
Jardim José do Canto	Ponta Delgada	71.152,52	7,7
Quinta da Boa Viagem	Viana do Castelo	107.772,29	11,5
Jardim do Paço Vitorino	Ponte de Lima	83.149,24	8,9
Jardim da Casa de Juste	Lousada	74.795,00	8,0
J. Botânico de Coimbra	Coimbra	52.843,01	5,6
Quinta das Lágrimas	Coimbra	158.198,34	16,9
Quinta das Machadas	Setúbal	84.748,50	9,1
Quinta da Senhor da Serra	Sintra	26.745,00	2,9
Quinta de Santo António	Lisboa	35.561,93	3,8
Quinta da Francelha	Loures	19.436,22	2,1
Total		936.012,00	100

Source: Elaborated from CASTEL-BRANCO et al., 2010.

## 2. The historic gardens as touristic attractions

The second half of the XX century point out not only the extension of the heritage concept, but also changes in the tourism activity, that became more competitive and exigent, tourists looks for originality, extended and unforgettable experiences, either visual or sensory or emotional (SIMÕES e FERREIRA, 2009; NOVELLI, 2005; NETTO e GAETA, 2011).

In this reflective framework the historic gardens and parks fit this idea of tourist experience (CONNELL e MEYER, 2004), with an emphasis on the visual experience (Rojek, 1995 cited in BHATTI e CHURCH, 2001), which leads to be considered the only way of imagescape (WANHILL, 2003, cited in FOX, 2006), important components of green-scape and irreplaceable part of the historic landscape (WILSON, 2009). To EVANS (2001), the gardens are tourist attractions in themselves and in their own right, so that the (historic) gardens, parks and botanic gardens has been identified as a strategic tourist resources and sometimes incorporates elements of identity and image of the territories, essential skills in its reading and qualification of them, mainly cities. Just think that some of the most famous tourist sites are gardens or are associated to gardens, considered famous tourist attractions in their own right due to its intrinsic value, such as Central Park (New York - USA), Versailles (France) or Keukenhof (The Netherlands), because are World Heritage as Kew Gardens (England), Classical Gardens of Suzhou (China) and the gardens of Schönbrunn (Austria), and because they are scenery or cause of world events and festivals materializing the increased interest in gardens, gardening and landscape such as the Chelsea Flower Show (England), the Floriade (The Netherlands), the *Bundestgartenshaus* (Federal Garden Shows in Germany), the *Rendez-vous aux jardins* (France) or the *Festa da Flor* in Madeira Island (Portugal). This events are responsible for both attracting numerous visitors as the promotion and image of the territories that receive them.

The garden visiting/garden tourism, defined as a kind of niche tourism that involves traveling and visiting gardens of various types, shapes and genesis with high phytodiversity, places with significance in the history of gardening, as well as related festivals and events (THOMAS et

al., 1994; QUINTAL, 2009), has been considered a form of cultural tourism in postmodern society that acquires an important role in time and leisure needs of the contemporary tourist (CONNELL, 2004; ASSUNÇÃO, 2008) that, above all, can be summarized in a “*recherche d’émerveillement, d’authenticité et de naturel*” (ARAMA-CARREL, 2006: 3).

A phenomenon to several authors, with a large margin of progression (CONNELL e MEYER, 2004; MÜLLER, 2011; BENFIELD, 2012), visiting gardens mobilizes in the USA more than 40 million tourists/visitors (BENFIELD, 2012), exceeds 16 million in Britain (EVANS, 2001) and 25 million in France (DELADERRIÈRE, 2004). Australia accounts about 11,8 million (ABS, 2007), Austria about 1,5 million (DIE GARTEN, 2007), and Ireland about 1,3 million (NISR, 2011). About gardens festivals, for example the Floriade had 2 million of visitors in 2012 and the *Rendez-vous aux jardins* had 1,8 million in 2011.

This numbers are not comparable between countries because the collection methods and the data available by year are different, but can be seen from this data the dimension of this touristic product in the world and its importance.

Portugal doesn’t have the greatness of the British, French or Italian gardens, especially those we mentioned before, but we also have been registering interesting numbers of garden visitors. Although the main focus of demand is located in Madeira Island, where only the top 3 gardens (Madeira Botanical Garden, Tropical Monte Palace Garden and Quinta do Palheiro Ferreiro) attract over 650,000 visitors with economic benefits above 3.5 million euros (QUINTAL, 2009; CAMACHO, 2010; JBM, 2012 ), on the Continent also there are some good examples such as Serralves Park (Oporto) with about 100 thousand visitors every year, Botanical Garden of Coimbra with more than 10 thousand in 2011, Palácio da Fronteira Garden (Lisbon) with more than 11 thousand in 2012 or Quinta da Avelada and gardens (Penafiel) that totalized almost 12 thousand visits in 2012 (FS, 2012; TAVARES, 2012; PMF, 2012).

To the garden visitors is added the flower and garden festivals visitors such as *Festa da Flor* in Madeira Island or the International Garden Festival in Ponte de Lima (May to October). The first one attracted about 50,000 visitors in 2012 just in the day parade, is responsible for one of the highest hotel occupancy rates (in 2012 amounted to 87% and this year the rate was 92%) (CASTRO, 2012; AL, 2013) and at this moment this festival exceeds the New Year’s Eve party total visitors (DRTM, 2012). The second one attracted about 105.000 visitors in 2012, including having been recognized as the Festival of the Year 2013 in the Garden Tourism Awards, part of the international event “2013 North American Garden Tourism Conference” (Toronto/Ontario) (CMPL, 2013).

These data imposes a central question: what makes the Portuguese gardens so attractive and so different? Four main character traits, due to our Mediterranean and Atlantic location, culture and our economic and socio-political story, can be identified: the diversity of trees and flower shrubs, the deep views, the tiles and the big water tanks which, alone or combined, give them their different character and originality, especially in the *Quintas de Recreio* from XVI to XVIII centuries (SOUSA VITERBO, 1906; ARAÚJO, 1962; CARITA e CARDOSO, 1987; CALDEIRA CABRAL, 1993; CASTEL-BRANCO, 2010).

About the product itself, it is almost unknown, little divulged and exploited and it could be included in the large product Cultural and Landscape Touring. Through the online channel we can find some references to the resource in the Portuguese tourist official sites, but too little mentions to the product. However, an online research inserting the English expressions

“garden tours in Portugal” and “garden tourism in Portugal” and the French “*tours des jardins aux Portugal*” and “*tourisme des jardins aux Portugal*” in the Google, revealed the existence of an important set of operators from countries like England, France, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and also Portugal selling the gardens tourism product in the country, with about 20 operators, among which six are Portuguese, with a total supply of almost 30 garden tourism packages/routes/itineraries in Portugal.

### Final notes

The recognition of the historic gardens heritage dimension was slow and gradual finding several resistances and even concrete difficulties. However, thanks to the determination and solid reasoning from a set of personalities and institutions that traced a new direction and attitude towards this particular type of heritage so rich but so vulnerable. A new attitude embodied in the Charter of Florence, which is still, to nowadays, the main guiding document regarding the historic gardens.

One of the ways to preserve and perpetuate these memories is through tourism that is perhaps one of the main reasons and motivations for the recovery, protection and valorization of this heritage.

The garden tourism/visiting is considered a phenomenon in an international level but in the Portuguese context is a lesser known tourism niche because some problems still remain: there is a lack of investigation and information about this thematic and business area; its potential is underestimated; there are degradation and abandonment of some gardens and there is a lack of a complete inventory that covers the whole country. In the other hand we have a rich set of historic gardens that bring together the Portuguese tradition and culture characteristics, a set of international tourist operators selling the garden tourism in Portugal and the big visibility of this product in Madeira Island.

So that, we perspective the garden tourism/visiting in Portugal has a large margin of improvement and has potential to turn into something more than a tourism niche.

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