

## PEATS Portugal- Chalcolithic to Bronze Age Placement 2017

The excavation at the site of Castanheiro do Vento (Chestnut Tree) was an unforgettable experience. Not only due to the complex and unique archaeology of the region, but also because of the amazing social activities and people that I have encountered along the way. The landscape of Freixo de Numão and the neighbouring town of Foz Côa was breath-taking, brimming with mountains, vineyards, and almond and olive trees; a world away from the English countryside. During our stay in Freixo de Numão we had three professors (João Muralha Cardoso, Ana Vale and Sérgio Gomes) in which cared and led us for the entire trip. Along with the Portuguese archaeological students, they made sure that we were comfortable, happy, and had a good understanding of what was going on.

Travelling to the accommodation in which we were staying was surprisingly easy. The train station is located next to the airport, and buying the ticket was simple enough with the help of a member of staff. A direct train journey took us to the centre of Porto where we stayed overnight at the Porto Guesthouse, this accommodation was clean, comfortable and had amazing views. The next morning, we travelled three hours, with magnificent mountainous views, to Freixo de Numão. Waiting at the train station were the lecturers, and after welcomes and a few smirks at the size of our luggage, we took the spectacular drive through the valley to our accommodation, ACDR.

The view from the accommodation in Porto.



The ACDR was, although not luxury, a lot better than any of us from Grampus expected. We had our own block of rooms below the lecturers, with two or three to a room. Each room had an ensuite, and the rooms were clean and the sheets were changed every week. The accommodation itself was also a restaurant and bar for the locals, so many people were constantly coming and going. The meals were *imitations* of traditional Portuguese dishes, as the Portuguese students constantly told us, however after long days working it was the kind of food you needed; the cooks also catered to everyone's needs (even me being a vegan, although they didn't quite understand why). Soup is served at the start of the meal (except weekends), and fresh fruit is always available afterwards. Breakfast is generally around 6:00, lunch around 13:30; straight after we come back from the dig site, and dinner is around 19:30; after the museum. The days were long, however there's plenty of down time after meals and between lunch and working at the museum.

The mornings, nonetheless, were one of the hardest things to deal with. We generally woke up around 5:30, for breakfast at six, and then left for the dig site at half past. The dig site itself is located at the top of a hill, surrounded by many others. The site is dated to c. 3rd millennium B.C., and is believed to be a place used for social connections; such as a meeting place, due to its unique views of the landscape and readiness of materials in the vicinity. For the first week, we mainly 'gardened', or removed the weeds from the site, and then we started excavating the bastions and walls, in order to get a better view and understanding of the structures and start to uncover the true purpose of the site. The bulk of finds consisted of fragmented pottery, mainly in a *penteado* style, and quartz (some flakes from the process of making larger tools). However, in some areas, mainly within the semi-circular structures of the bastions, charcoal and the bone of small animals were found. The

artefacts uncovered in which were particularly intriguing were the jade tools, several loom weights, including two quadruple-holed loom weights, and on the final days Ana found a complete flint arrowhead. Moreover, we were also instructed on section drawing, total stationing, and finds processing (washing and labelling).



The archaeological dig site of Castanheiro do Vento (Chestnut Tree).



LEFT: A jade tool found at the dig site.

ABOVE: A flint arrow head found at the dig site

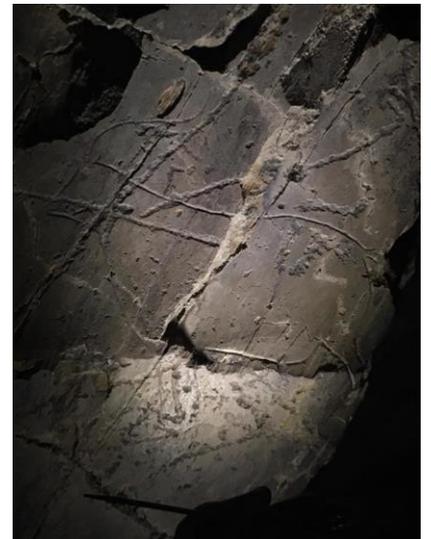
We had the weekends free, therefore we were taken on many different archaeological fieldtrips, such as the incredible Palaeolithic open air engravings of the Côa river valley, a UNESCO world heritage site; Castelo Velho de Freixo de Numão, the ruins of a copper age castle; a hike to Prazo, a Neolithic, Roman, Medieval site; Romansii Roman site, making and processing wine and other materials; and, of course, the local Museum of Casa Grande, complete with archaeological ruins on site. We were also given down time at the weekend, we went to the lovely local community pool in Foz Côa every Sunday, visited the café multiple times, in a day, and once we went to the towns' Pimba party.



ABOVE: The swimming pool in Foz Côa.

LEFT: The view from Castelo Velho

RIGHT: One of the Palaeolithic cave engravings from the UNESCO World Heritage Site.



The Côa river in the Douro Valley.

Overall, this experience has been so important for me. The archaeological knowledge I have learnt has been invaluable and we set me up for later in my archaeological career. But also, the friends I have made, from all over the world, have been most rewarding. The hardest part of this trip would have to be the hot weather, although we were well cared for and it at least bearable, and the long hours, however the weekends made up for this. My time in Freixo de Numão was unforgettable and I believe anyone that would like to pursue a career in archaeological should jump at the chance to experience a placement with Grampus.



My group of friends from all around the world.