



QUINTA DO COBRAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY - July 2022

This document will be updated every 12 months

OUR ETHOS

VISION

From the very beginning of our journey our aim has been to offer guests a beautiful and luxurious holiday destination thoughtfully, sustainably and ethically designed and built (literally from the ground up in our case) in harmony with our beautiful surroundings here in Central Portugal. We provide a peaceful haven where stressed visitors can come and relax in nature, especially families, switch off and enjoy their time together. We hope to provide an experience which ignites a spark and gets our visitors talking about their own sustainable journey and how they can do more for their own environment.

MISSION

It is our aim to create as little detrimental impact on our beautiful environment as possible. We believe that sustainable travel can provide a unique family-friendly holiday experience for the conscientious traveller who is looking for something a bit different. We aim to reduce our negative effects and increase our positive impacts.

While doing this we will continually strive to improve our environmental practices in a range of areas including energy supply and consumption, single use plastics and, most importantly to us here in Portugal, water usage. We realise our journey will be a continuous one, improving where we can, aiming to highlight areas that require more development through regular measurement, assessment and reviews.

Our small guest house was once a calf house as the farm was known for breeding Oxen used to cultivate the land, help with building projects and lift water for domestic use and irrigation. When we first moved here the farm had been abandoned for 45-50 years and was in a sorry state. While this was a huge renovation project it was also an opportunity to rebuild using and incorporating as many sustainable systems and materials as possible. Visitors come to our region for its natural beauty and dramatic landscapes as well as food, wine and culture. We hope our guest house now offers something for everyone, something original, historical and unique also a sustainable alternative to a conventional getaway. We offer a return to nature and the great outdoors alongside comfort and relaxation where little details make a big impression and promote a sense of well being and tranquility for all. Many of our guests are just beginning on their path to becoming more eco-friendly, some have not started, this is absolutely fine, we try not to preach but to offer friendly and inspirational ideas for change.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We have achieved a huge amount since our journey began but are aware that there is always room for improvement. We set ourselves new goals constantly, some small and easily achievable some on a much longer term basis, we post our improvement goals on our website to inform visitors of our plans and to give us a nudge to make sure we work hard to achieve them. (see our Action Plan)

MEASURING IMPACTS - See *Waste Management Plan and Climate Action Plan and Carbon Management*

We commit to measure where possible however as a self catering holiday destination it is difficult to control in terms of energy and water consumption as well as waste produced. By strong and consistent communication through our website, the letting platforms we use and information available to our guests we try to encourage a consciousness of usage in the first place. We have a "Responsible Visitors Guide" clearly placed on our notice board, this offers guests a chance to see where they can make a difference. We strongly encourage our guests to conserve water and use a 2 flush cistern on our toilets.

ENERGY CONSUMPTION - See *Solar Management Checklist*

This is an area where we can make the biggest difference we believe. When we first brought the Quinta 20 years ago it had been abandoned for many years, had no electricity or water or any other "mains" connection so we took this as the opportunity to go completely "off grid"

ELECTRICITY - We run a stand alone solar system with a 5.2kw solar panel array, the electricity generated is stored in a bank of lead acid batteries, (our last battery array lasted us 14 years and was disposed of responsibly by a local, complete recycling service) we have 6kw of deliverable power. We have a 5kw diesel generator connected to our system for back up during grey, rainy days however we rarely, if ever use this. Last winter we used the generator for 1 day. This system supplies both our house and our Guest House with a continuous supply of electricity all year round. People not realising that we are off grid would not see any difference to a conventional house indeed our system gives us a more reliable supply than the grid which is not always dependable here in Portugal.

With our system we run the following:

All lights, electrical appliances such as computers and TV

2 large chest freezers

2 fridges

washing machine (we do not have a tumble dryer choosing to line dry all our bedding and towels)

dishwasher

overhead fans

pumps for our 2 boreholes

pumps for the underfloor central heating system

swimming pool pump and salt water system

garden irrigation

CURRENT ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION (GRID) - Zero consumption

HOT WATER - We run a reliable solar thermal system with 2 indirect solar panels heating a 300L water cylinder for domestic use. This system gives us an ample supply of hot water. We run a solar hot water shower by the swimming pool.

CURRENT OIL CONSUMPTION - 250L per year of diesel for the farm tractor and the generator

CURRENT GAS CONSUMPTION - Guest house 8x bottles per year = 172.8L

Main house 4x bottles per year = 112.8L per year (we have slightly different size cylinders for the two houses)

HEATING - Wood pellets - 1110K per year

Timber - we burn 15 cubic metres of timber a year currently for cooking and heating - 5 cubic meters a year are provided by coppicing our land and the other 10 cubic meters (hardwood) are bought in from a local wood supplier.

BUILDINGS - See *building Maintenance Checklist*

Both our houses have highly efficient roof insulation helping to keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer. We also have floor insulation too. Both houses are of traditional solid granite construction. which offer exceptional energy efficiency thanks to the natural insulation provided. During the day the thick stone walls keep the houses cool inside so no air conditioning systems are required. In the winter the granite walls absorb the heat of the day which then heats the internal spaces during the evening and night. All windows and glazed doors (where applicable) are double glazed.

Heating in both houses is currently supplied by wood, the guest house has a highly efficient Jotul wood burning stove capable of quickly heating the whole house. The main house uses an ESSE solid fuel cooker which also heats the domestic water during the winter when the solar thermal is not quite so efficient. This system is automatically switched when the domestic hot water cylinder reaches capacity and sent to our 800L buffer tank which stores the hot water for use in the under floor heating system. We currently use a pellet boiler to heat the buffer tank too but we are hoping to change this during Autumn 2022 to a log burning biomass boiler (see Action Plan).

Our workshop areas have floor and roof insulation and large double glazed windows providing excellent solar gain, heating is by 2 small, highly efficient wood burners.

WATER CONSUMPTION - See *Pool Maintenance Checklist*

We harvest our own pure bore hole water, currently running 2 bore holes, each is 65m below ground, the water is filtered through solid granite providing us with cool, clean water free from chlorine, fluoride or any other nasty added chemicals. This water feeds both houses and our workshops. No bleach, chlorine or any harsh detergents or cleaning products are ever used. We use our river for irrigation of the gardens and filling/topping up the swimming pool. To date we do not have a water meter in order to monitor consumption, however we do know exactly how much water each bore hole supplies so we are planning to instate measuring and monitoring our water usage on a yearly basis.

We have a 30,000L water holding tank at the top of our land which is kept topped up by one of our bore holes. This water can be used on a gravity feed to irrigate our gardens, vineyard and trees when needed and so, eventually, returning to its original source underground. This tank water is also used to top up the swimming pool in very dry years when our river dries up. We keep the tank fully topped up especially during the summer months as this forms a major part of our fire prevention and protection plans (see Fire Plan).

As a self-catering destination there is only so much control we can have over our guest water consumption but below are some of the measures we currently take to try and reduce consumption.

- Water saving dual flush mechanisms on our toilets.
- Recommending guests, by way of signage and on our guest information, ways to adopt more water conscious behaviour eg using less water when cooking, not filling the kettle for just one cup of tea, not filling the sink to wash up but using the bowl provided, not letting taps run, taking short showers (we do not have a bath in our guest house)
- Providing hand washing liquid so there is less use of the washing machine

- In very hot summers providing a bucket to store all used water from washing up and cleaning which is then collected and used to water the gardens

WASTE PRODUCTION - See *Waste Management Plan*

We calculate our waste production every month, and base it on nightly occupancy rates. This helps to even out the monthly differences experienced from quieter winter months to busy peak summer months. This is then averaged out to reach our daily waste production figures. Based on our nightly occupancy rates last year we have calculated the following waste creation per guest:

- Non recyclable waste - each guest creates 0.174kg per day
- Recyclable waste - each guest creates 0.112kg per day
- Food waste - we compost all our food waste and as such do not consider it waste and it is not measured

We are committed to reducing waste and our ultimate goal would be to become a zero waste business, however this is a very difficult thing to achieve in a self catering destination where our guests have very varied experience and knowledge of recycling.

Ways in which we try to reduce waste produced:

- Adhering to the 3 R's Reduce, Re-use and Recycle we would also add compost to that as well.
- Educating and information guests prior to visiting via our welcome email and our guest information on methods of reducing waste during their stay.
- Asking guests to separate all waste in the bins provided, items we recycle this way are paper, card, plastics, aluminium, glass and food waste.
- Providing guests with a fats and grease recycling information sheet and a receptacle in the kitchen to collect the waste fats and grease produced during their stay.
- We provide glass bottles for guests to fill with our bore hole water and chill in the fridge rather than use plastic bottles. We also provide guests with stainless steel 500ml thermal bottles to take with them when they go out for the day rather than buy more plastic bottles. We encourage guests to use our own water to fill up their bottles.
- Providing a guest compost bin and educating guests in what to place in this bin. This bin is lined with a compostable bag and then gets added to our large composting bays when full.
- Growing as much of our own vegetables and meat which we provide for our guests when needed in the form of freezer packs and vegetable boxes. We also make all our own preserves, cordials and pickles which are also available for guests.
- Encouraging guests not to bring too much food with them (which can lead to waste) but instead to shop locally for supplies when needed.
- Providing our guests with bamboo fibre produce bags to take when shopping instead of using single use plastic bags, these can then be washed and re-used. We also provide large reusable shopping bags too.
- Reusing all cardboard boxes and packaging on the vegetable garden as a weed mulch helping to cut down weeds and preserve water.
- All our office paper is printed on recycled paper (reused when possible) using chlorine free paper, all printer inks are recycled.
- We are members of #wechoosetoreuse a campaign by Zero Waste Europe, we have signed their manifesto and have adopted their commitment to moving away from single use plastic.

- We are proud to be one of the 300+ refill stations as part of the “Refill” campaign designed to help reduce single use plastic. The app is available as a free download and shows users where they can freely top up their reusable water bottles.

We undertake to continue increasing our recycling rates over the next 12 months, see our Waste Management Plan.

ETHICAL PURCHASING - We use all natural (handmade here) cleaning products on our farm and guest house and we do our best to shop ethically and locally. We embrace organic principles with our animals (producing all our own meat and eggs ourselves) and our land. We are committed to the following:

- I am an experience natural soap maker also teaching and providing courses on soap making in my studio on the farm. I also teach courses on making natural home products and products for the body and health. All our cleaning products are made on site and include no harsh chemicals such as SLS, SLES, Parabens or chemical preservatives and fragrances. All packaging is recyclable or compostable (I use starch cellophane bags for the soaps and cardboard tubes and pots for deodorant and creams)
- When sourcing products we look for those that are, where possible, produced within 50km.
- We provide a local market guide telling guests when the markets happen and providing bus timetables and eco produce bags to take with them
- Providing firewood for our guests that comes from local sources or our own managed woodland.
- Providing matches for guests to light the fire and gas BBQ.
- We do not allow disposable BBQ's not only because of the environmental damage but because of the fire risk.
- Providing all natural eco-friendly firelighters made of wood pulp and recycled wax, we also provide pine cones to help light the wood burner.
- All bed spreads, duvet covers, pillow cases, mattress protectors, towels, etc. are cotton - never made with polyester/synthetic materials.
- Dust pans are metal with wooden hand brushes with natural bristles rather than synthetic.
- Supporting local crafts and handmade artisan products made using natural materials wherever possible eg. handwoven local wool blankets, pottery and rugs.
- We provide bamboo and natural bristle kitchen brushes along with compostable scourers
- We provide our own home grown olive oil which is cold pressed in our local mill, supplied in glass bottles.
- Coffee and tea provided for guests is Fair Trade certified, the tea bags, where possible, are compostable.
- All toilet rolls are made from recycled pulp. We provide bamboo, re-washable kitchen rolls.
- Biodegradable/compostable bin bags are used in all the small bins including the compost bin.
- Guest amenities such as toothbrushes, earbuds and face cleansing pads are all bamboo and compostable.
- Except for business cards, which are printed locally on recycled card, all our marketing is online, we use no other printed materials
- Our guest information is printed on paper made from 100% recycled materials
- Cut flowers for our guests come from our own organic flower cutting garden

- Each toilet on our farm is twinned with latrines throughout the worlds poorest areas through “Toilet Twinning” who work with Tear Fund to help bring clean water and safe sanitation to the worlds poorest people.

We are always looking for new ways to improve in this area - focus areas are included in our Action Plan.

CARBON MANAGEMENT - Reducing our carbon footprint is something we prioritise. We feel we have made great strides already but know that there are areas in which we can improve, these are set out in our Climate Action Plan and Carbon Management.

CARBON FOOTPRINT CALCULATION

We have calculated our estimated total footprint over the last 12 months to be 5.64 tons this includes the whole footprint of Quinta do Cobral e.g. diesel consumption, owner flights, firewood burnt etc. this also includes our own household of 2 people.

The carbon footprint per guest night is 15.6k per night (this does not include their travel however)

Calculator used - www.carbonfootprint.com

RESPONSIBLE SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING - Communication with our guests is really important to us and to do this in an honest way. We spend a lot of time communicating news, eco tips, guest reviews etc. via our social media pages on both facebook and instagram. We also do this using our various rental platforms and our own website. We currently hold a “Travel Sustainable Property” badge on [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) and have won an award for 2022 with Travel & Hospitality for our innovative green design of our guesthouse. We commit to:

- Honesty and transparency in all communications to guests and those viewing our social media accounts and website.
- Admitting that our efforts in sustainability are evolving and changing daily, we do not know everything and commit to global ethical marketing guidelines.
- Not engaging in any products or promotions that are not in line with our own policies.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - We aim to support our local community by:

- giving free tours of our farm and buildings to individuals learning about natural building methods, solar systems, ecological animal and farm management as well as natural product making.
- Donating gifts of handmade soaps and natural products for local fundraising events.
- We donate old towels, pet equipment and funds/feed to our local animal charities.
- during the fire season we donate water and energy bars to our local volunteer firemen.
- We employ firms and people from the local area whenever work is required on our farm and in the guest house.
- Promoting other destination providers to our guests such as local yoga retreats, leisure hire (canoes, paddle boards), horse riding centres, local cafes, restaurants, small shops and much more, ensuring they all have the same ethos as us.
- Supporting local events and festas by visiting ourselves and promoting them to our guests.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BIODIVERSITY - We are huge lovers of the outdoors and believe passionately in protecting, maintaining and improving the natural environment around us. Walking in our valley is fantastic, there are tracks everywhere and we actively encourage our guests to get out and about and enjoy the beauty of the nature that surrounds us. We also believe in helping to improve family life, we actively encourage family visitors and when here give them lots of support and ideas for spending time together and enjoying nature. We aim to protect and conserve our local biodiversity in the following ways:

- We are currently working with ICNF through the Instituto da Conservacao da Natureza e da Biodiversidade to help us to create a bespoke Biodiversity policy and plan for the farm
- We are a small working farm and commit to using no chemical fertilisers, nitrates, weed-killers or pesticides on the land or our vegetable garden
- We have areas on our farm that are left wild and have reduced mowing through the year to help with biodiversity and conservation. We keep our river (along our boundaries) as clean and free flowing as possible.
- We support and help to conserve biodiversity in our region by donating to local biodiversity and wildlife organisations.
- We have planted many new trees on our farm, Olives, fruit trees and indigenous species special to our region. We have planted trees that will help to fix our river banks and prevent erosion in the winter months.
- We have mapped and created walking routes around the area for our visitors and provided lots of lovely spaces on our land to allow visitors to appreciate and enjoy spending time here.
- We grow our own vegetables in an organic garden, no weed-killer or pesticides are ever used and use only our own organic compost made from our vegetable waste and animal manure/hay/straw.
- In the vegetable garden we allow our over-wintering vegetables go to flower to provide pollinators with feed when there are still few other sources available. Similarly we grow flowers that go to seed (such as sunflowers) and leave them to benefit hungry birds.
- We actively promote environmental awareness to our guests providing them with lots of reference books on local birds, insects, butterflies, plants and reptiles to help them identify what they see. We encourage our guests to ask about our building methods, the history of the farm and our solar systems, showing them how it all works if they wish to see.
- Our swimming pool uses a salt water system providing our guests with a gentle and skin friendly swimming experience while cutting out the need to use damaging toxic chemicals for sanitation.
- We do not provide a TV for our guests but provide lots of old fashioned board games and cards as well as hand drawn exploring guides and a nature hunt for families to do together on the farm.
- We provide bird boxes around the farm
- We have built insect hotels and make sure piles of logs are left for insects and other creatures to use
- We have designed and hand drawn a set of "Go Wild" fun activities to encourage children and families to explore our farm and surrounding areas. We have included a hand drawn treasure hunt colouring page for our youngest visitors
- We provide bug hunting kits, binoculars, torches for star watching and den building kits

Here at Quinta do Cobral we are always looking for ways to help reduce our carbon footprint and improve our environmental and sustainability practices. We welcome any

questions or suggestions that you might have. Please either talk to us on site or contact us via email info@quintadocobral.com

Quinta do Cobral

Ishbel Ramsay - This policy was last updated on - Thursday 24th November 2022