

28.

## BRIDGE OF PANCHORRA



Rua da Ponte da  
Panchorra, Panchorra  
Resende



41° 0' 50.33" N  
7° 58' 30.27" W



+351 918 116 488



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Public Interest  
Monument, 2013



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Free



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The parish of Panchorra, in the municipality of Resende, is part of a mountainous territory located close to a wide marshy plateau area known for centuries as the “Alagoa de D. João”. Both Eça de Queiroz and Abel Botelho echoed the fame of this extraordinary orographic document in their novels *The crime of father Amaro* and *Women of Beira*, respectively.

Close by, in a place with the suggestive name of Casa da Neve [Snow House], we find the spring of river Cabrum, which currently divides the municipalities of Cinfães and Resende, stretching along 10 kilometres before meeting the river Douro. The initial section of its course runs along plains, with about 1300 to 1050 meters, and it was on one of these plains that the Bridge of Panchorra was built, standing in the heart of a stunning landscape.

The double-arched Bridge shows regular ashlars on the voussoirs and irregular ashlars on the masonry of the rest of the structure, which indicates that the job was made by local artisans, expressed in a work that is not monumental but rather intended to fulfil the needs of the Panchorra community in terms of access to its agricultural and sylvan properties. Given the predominance of both



transhumant and local cattle, there was a demand for routes that could ensure the frequent passage of animals and carts. Although, in this section, the Cabrum does not present a significant flow, its strong current, depending on thaws, made it difficult for shepherds and farmers to ensure the subsistence and supply of men and animals, especially during the winter.

The Bridge of Panchorra, which is difficult to date but was surely not built before the Modern Period, is one of the east-west crossings over the river Cabrum. Upstream, a small stone crossing in Gralheira allowed travelling across the mountain to Campo Benfeito and Rossão (Castro Daire). Downstream, the bridges of Ovadas, Lagariça and Nova correspond to older circulation channels in areas

where the population distribution (along the Douro) had always been higher. The taking of the mountain by men, despite having begun almost in the aftermath of the Reconquest in the Douro region (after the year 1000), translated into a slow progress throughout the Modern Period. Even though it was mentioned as early as 1258, Panchorra only achieved its parochial autonomy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when it was detached from Ovadas. It is within this agro-pastoral context, which allowed the subsistence of communities in areas with altitudes over 1000 meters, that we should understand the need for the ancient Bridge, a symbol of the communitarian pragmatism and a valuable example of vernacular engineering that is definitely worthy of a long visit.



#### DON'T MISS OUT

- 7.2 km: Vale de Papas – "Aldeia de Portugal" (p. 268)