

Warning: this is a document to support the walker, not being allowed to be reproduced for commercial purposes, without the written authorization of Rota Vicentina®.

Located near Ribeira do Seissal de Cima, at the top of a hill with a magnificent view, the Hermitage of Nossa Senhora das Neves is a holy place, dear to the local population. The path alternates between fresh valleys and narrow footpaths, traveling through ridges where the hiker's gaze gets lost in the vast distance.

Surrounded by hillsides with magnificent cork tree forests, it is in the valleys (Vale de Figueira, Vale Fojo de Baixo and Vale do Poço) that the fertile lands of this route lie. At the summits (Senhora das Neves and Serra da Estrela) rare plants can be found, such as the *Centaurea vicentina*, endemic to southwestern Portugal. In numerous springs, tanks and wells, the abundant water gives life to the soil of these valleys. On the well of Vale Figueira, one can read the verses written by the people, showing their gratitude for this fertile land - "May God maintain your purity, in this valley of enchantment, you are a well of richness...".







This route is rich in wild plants, which bloom throughout the year. In the winter you can find the hyacinths or the Iberian milk-vetch. In the spring, lavender, brooms, gum rockrose, sage-leaved rock-rose, purple phlomis and hawthorn flourish. In May comes the sea squill, the oregano, the cardoon, the lady's glove and the Mediterranean fleabane. The strawberry tree, calamints and *Lithodora prostrata* are almost always in bloom. The heaths are especially abundant. The white heaths dominate the shrubs when they are in bloom. They include the Portuguese heath (*Erica lusitanica*), which flowers from December to March, after which the flowers of the tree heath (*Erica arborea*) appear and bloom until June.

Tree heath is rare, so make sure to take the opportunity to appreciate it along your winter walks. Don't forget to look for some of the most common birds along the route - the corn bunting, the blackbird, the great spotted woodpecker, the partridge, the curlew, the european robin and the shrike.

It's said the Virgin Mary once appeared at the top of this hill, so the people built a little chapel at the foot of the hill to worship her. The story goes that they had been gathering stones to build the chapel, when one day the stones miraculously appeared at the top of the hill. So that is where

they ended up building the little chapel. In this sanctuary, probably built during the eighteenth century, vestiges of ancient defensive walls can be found from a once fortified settlement from the High Middle Ages - Islamic Period. A rectangular tank dug into the rock, with channels for directing water, is quite intriguing. Did the tank relate to the worshipping of water or other religious purpose? Could it have been a small grave? To this day it remains a mystery.

RULES & RECOMMENDATIONS

-  Walk only along the marked trails
-  The circulation of motor vehicles puts hikers at risk. Choose alternative paths.
-  The trails cross private properties; always close gates and fences. The cattle are tame but can get aggressive if you approach their offspring.
-  Respect Nature. Do not collect or disturb animals, plants or rocks.
-  Do not camp or light fires outside designated areas.
-  Trails without WC, bring a bag and leave the paths clean
-  Keep your dog on a leash and clean up after it.
-  Prepare your hike well, don't run any risks from lack of preparation or planning.

SOS

Emergency: 112
Environment and territory Police
Department: 808 200 520
For further information on accommodation, restaurants and nature/cultural activities please contact the local Tourism Office or go to rotavicentina.com

HELP US

For any further information or help regarding the Rota Vicentina, please contact us:

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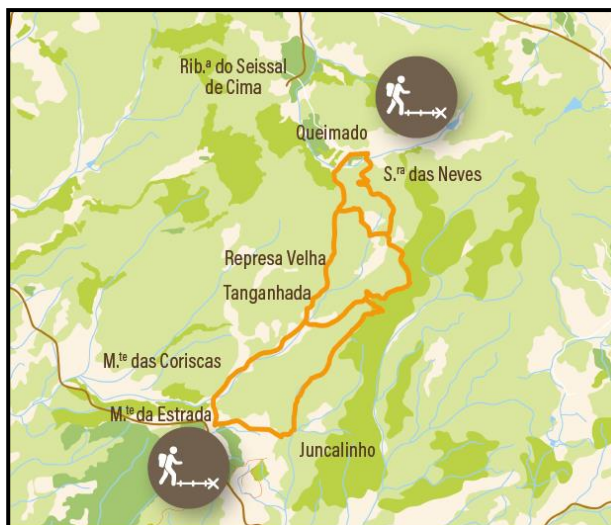
SENHORA DAS NEVES

CIRCULAR ROUTE | 5 KM / 8 KM / 13 KM

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DESCRIPTION OF ROUTE

From the starting point, the Chapel of Senhora das Neves can be seen; however, the route starts on the right, leading towards the villages of Figueirinha and Monte da Estrada. After walking 1 km, you will see the first and shortest variation of the route on your left. To follow the longer route, go straight ahead; and pass by Ecotourism Figueirinha. After about 600 m, there will be another possibility to shorten the trail on your left. If you continue walking straight, you will pass by a well, and arrive in Monte da Estrada, where there are two cafes for a refreshment. Turn left, passing next to the artist's Liberdade Sobral house, and exit the village by following a path on your right. The trail will start descending. Before a farm, take the path to the left leading to a valley and, at the first fork, turn left again. After passing several houses, the path will become narrower. Continue straight and, please, make sure to close behind you the gates and fences you will walk through. When you reach the top of the mountain, keep going the same direction through the forest; the trail will lead to a place called Serra da Estrela boasting a truly wonderful landscape. Take the same path back for about 50 m and turn right walking down until you encounter again the intermediate version of this route. Turn right and enter the valley. After approximately 500 m, turn left and start walking up, until you cross the ridge. From here descend; you will find the shortest version of the route on your left. Carry on, continuing to walk up along the ridge until you arrive at a geodetic mark and the Chapel of Senhora das Neves – this is more than a perfect place for a picnic. From here, the path keeps descending until the end of the route, passing by a statue made by Liberdade Sobral.



FACT SHEET:

Distance: 5 km / 8 km / 13 km
Approximate duration: 2h / 3 h 30 m / 5h
Accumulated descent: 200 m / 350 m / 500 m
Difficulty level : Average / Average / Hard
Max. / Min. Altitude 277 m / 110 m
 Recommended direction ccounterclockwise
 Recommended season September till June

WHERE TO START?

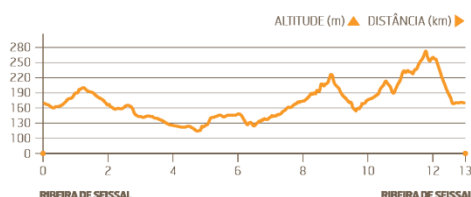
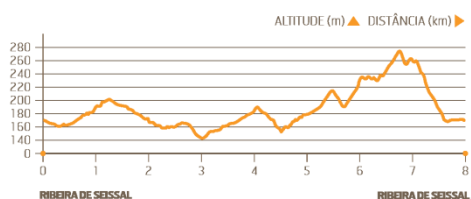
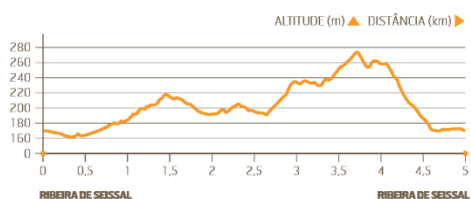
Ribeira do Seissal: between Seissal stream and the path ascending to the Chapel of Senhora das Neves, in a parking area with a Rota Vicentina information board and sign plate.

IMPORTANT WARNINGS:

This course has three options, so be aware of the different markings.

TIPS:

You can also start the hike in the village of Monte da Estrada.
 Refreshments along the way: In Monte da Estrada or Ribeira do Seissal.



Download the **Rota Vicentina APP** and take it with you all the information about this route

