



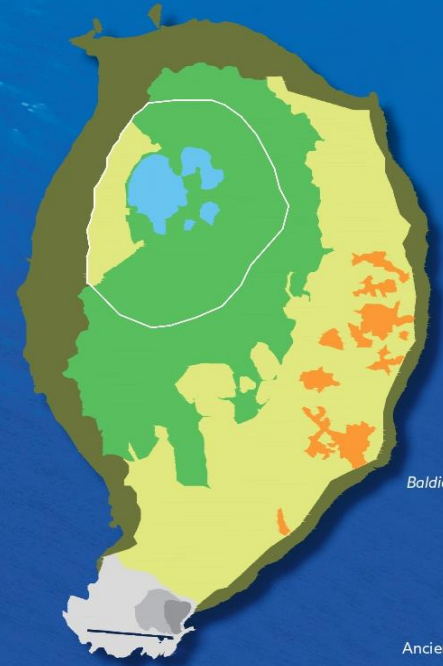
VILA DO CORVO INTERPRETATIVE CIRCUIT

GOVERNO DOS AÇORES
cultura
CORVO
ECOMUSEUM



THE INTERPRETATIVE CIRCUIT

The Interpretative Circuit of Vila do Corvo is an instrument for territorial interpretation, that was conceived in a participatory way, within the project of Corvo Ecomuseum. Culture being the result of a community's adaptation to a certain territory, in Corvo these are the elements that characterize it: fields bordered by their stone walls, abundant pastures in the *baldio* and the small lanes interconnecting them, windmills, the uniqueness of its urban structure with its complex density and system of narrow streets and lanes, the threshing floors where once wheat was threshed and a *chamarrita* was danced. Thus, only by roaming and interpreting the territory, the streets and lanes, as well as by listening to the people sharing their stories, will the visitor be able to perceive the essence and the history of Corvo's community.



THE OCCUPATION OF THE TERRITORY

From early on, Corvo Island settlement was constrained by the territory characteristics and the resources it held. In order to ensure the success of the undertaking, three questions had to be answered: what to eat, where to shelter and what to wear. Searching for the answers to these questions led to the territorial organization noticeable still today, where human marks are evident. The settlement was installed to the east of the *fajã* (platform resulting from the lava flow), the only place on the Island having access to the sea, so that the largest amount of fertile ground for growing remained available to the west, thus solving the first two questions. With animals released on the Island upon its discovery, sheep farming answered the third question. For centuries, Corvo population used the wool of these animals, which grazed freely on the *baldio* (communal property and management area) to craft clothes. With the growth of the population there was the need to also cultivate higher ground, the so-called highlands, the *baldio* remaining for cattle farming. When the cattle increased in number, some of the higher lands were then used for grazing.



- Handicraft
- Library
- City Hall
- Drugstore
- ATM machine
- Bakery
- Multi-sports facility
- Fishing port
- Post office
- RIAC - Citizen support store
- Social Security
- Snack-bar
- Grocery store
- Cheese factory - Corvo cured cheese
- Accommodation unit
- Health unit
- Toilet/WC

The House of Time

Rua das Pedras, s/n
9980-025 Vila do Corvo – Azores
Coordinates
Lat. 39.672494
Long. -31.111258

Memory House and Atafona do Lourenço

Canada da Graciosa, s/n
9980-031 Vila do Corvo – Azores
Coordinates
Lat. 39.673723
Long. -31.111721

Multipurpose Cultural Space

Rua Joaquim Pedro Coelho, s/n
9980-037 Vila do Corvo – Azores
Coordinates
Lat. 39.674358
Long. -31.114514

Contacts:

Telephone: (+351) 292 596 063
E-mail: ecomuseu.corvo.info@azores.gov.pt
Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/museudoterritorio/>
Instagram: @ecomuseudocorvo
Webpage:
<https://ecomuseu-corvo.cultura.azores.gov.pt/>



1 CASA DA VEGIA WATCH HOUSE



This space opened on June 27th 2024. This is a prime area for a first glance at the old centre of Vila do Corvo. It's located on the cliff of Porto da Casa and connects Canada da Rocha to Rua da Matriz through a public area, where several threshing floors lie. From here, the visitor can admire the urban structure, organized upon the cliff, ascending in cascade on the volcano slope. The Watch House presents a scale model of the Old Urban Centre, introducing the visitor to the different public areas of Vila do Corvo.

2 CANADA DA ROCHA



The old center of Vila do Corvo is located to the east of the fajã (platform resulting from the lava flow). Its setting makes it similar to a village from the north of Portugal, due to the closeness of the houses, interconnected by a complex system of lanes and narrow streets.

Despite the availability of lands to the west, the whole population settled on the east, whether for a sense of collective safety or because of the availability of fertile lands.

The northern steep slope is a natural border between the lowlands and the highlands, as well as a protection against the prevailing northwest winds.

The village houses present their main façades to the south, thus ensuring a greater sun exposure and visibility to the neighboring community.

3 THE HOUSE OF TIME



In Rua das Pedras (Stones Street), a toponym referring to its ground, is located the House of Time. This space, a material structure of the Ecomuseum, works as an antechamber of the territory, providing the visitor with information both on the history of the island and its inhabitants, through audiovisual and multimedia resources, inviting to a visit.

From this information, visitors will be able to build their own route, according to their own interests or curiosity, starting from an outlook of intelligibility that enables them to give a sense to what they see and, thus, to experience Corvo.

4 CANADA DO MANQUINHO



When climbing Canada do Manquinho, one can observe several urban and architectural features of the village: the labyrinthine and steep shape of the lanes, oriented north-south and crossing the streets; the long and narrow buildings, whose plan areas follow topography; the existence of little gaps separating the buildings and showing these were not built adjoined to their neighbors' walls, as well as the ennoblement of the main façade, facing south, enhanced by a stone counter and stairway, with the main openings of the building and the location of little yards in the front.

The pronounced delimitation of the yard and the little spaces between the houses reveal the other side of the communal society of former Corvo. If, on one hand, communitarianism¹ entails a spirit of mutual assistance, the shared management of a common asset, such as the baldio (common land), and the existence of an egalitarian society, on the other hand, engender in Corvo the need to clearly delimit private property.

5 CANTO DO REGO



Porto da Casa bay, in front of the village, was the stage of many pirate and corsair attacks, since the island didn't have means of defense against them.

The attack of Sir Francis Drake, a privateer at the service of the British Crown, who sets on fire the then called Porto das Casas in 1587, as well as the attack of the Berber pirates in 1632, who are defeated by Corvo population, despite their smaller number and having only rocks to defend themselves, are two of the most remarkable incidents.

This last episode gave rise to one of the most significant legends² of the community, to which artist José Ruy payed tribute through a panel of glazed tiles, as well as the comic book named A Ilha do Corvo que Venceu os Piratas³ [The Island of Corvo that Defeated the Pirates], conceived through a participatory process, in the context of the Ecomuseum project.

6 CASA DO CORVO/ CANADA DO MAURÍCIO



Corvo's typical house results from a range of changes and improvements which took place over the years, knowing periods of more or less intense development. In the 16th century, Gaspar Frutuoso was the first to make a reference to Corvo's casas palhaças, alluding to their thatched roof. The deepest changes date from the 19th century, when Corvo's vernacular house⁴ takes shape with a quite singular typology: built in volcanic stone masonry, sometimes covered with mortar, it has a rectangular or "L" shaped floor plan, two floors and a gable-roof with regional tile. On the ground floor were located the kitchen with its wood oven, as well as the shed, where tools were stored and animals were housed. These rooms were connected by an interior door, but had also an external and independent access. On the upper floor were located the bedrooms and the living room, firstly only accessible by outside staircases, a situation then altered by the introduction of interior stairs. Outside were the pen and the sty.

7 THE WASH HOUSE



On the top of Rua da Fonte, today's Rua Pedro Pimentel Cepo, stands the first fountain of the village, built in 1836, and the last of the three wash-houses that existed (the others were the one of Pedras and the one of Jogo da Bola). Here one can see four different areas: a trough for animals, since this was one of the pedestrian accesses to the highlands, a fountain providing water for several domestic uses, a wash-house with six sinks, where women washed clothes, and a single stone sink, where diapers, sick people's clothes and recently dyed wool were washed.

With the construction of this space, improved in 1891 thanks to the Improvement Commission, created the previous year and directed by the priest José Machado Gregório de Mendonça, easy access to drinking water was ensured for the first time.

In 2016, the fountain of Fonte de Cima was refurbished by the city hall, aiming to bring it closer to its original appearance, according to a photographic record from the end of the 19th century.

8 TOP OF MARANHÃO



From the top of Ladeira do Maranhão one can see two threshing floors, made of slabs of stone, covered with mortar, as well as another unpaved. Corvo had once thirty-six threshing floors, of which twenty-three remain today. These were used to thresh wheat, rye and barley, as well as lupins and beans. The ownership of the threshing floors was commonly shared between two or more families, and those who didn't own one, were able to use them for free, depending on their availability.

The tough tax of yearly 40 moios of wheat, the equivalent to 36 tonnes, that burdened Corvo's community for about three centuries, deepened the need for these threshing areas, built with stone mainly extracted from Rocha do Rego.

Cereals being the basis of the diet of rural communities, such as Corvo's, the lack of wheat, almost entirely intended for the tax payment and the sowing of the following year, compelled the population to find other alternatives. Thus emerged the reliance on sedge (Cyperus esculentus), a tuber whose nutritive and medicinal properties are acknowledged today.

INTERPRETATIVE CIRCUIT OF VILA DO CORVO

USEFULL CONTACTS AND INFORMATIONS

TOURISM OFFICE – Boat House
(+351) 292 596 277

CITY HALL
(+351) 292 590 200

EMERGENCY CONTACT - 112



More information
<https://www.facebook.com/museudoterritorio/>

MULTIPURPOSE CULTURAL SPACE - TECHNICAL SUPPORT
Rua Joaquim Pedro Coelho, s/n, 9980-037, Vila do Corvo
E-mail: ecomuseu.corvo.info@azores.gov.pt
Telephone: (+351) 292 596 063

9 MEMORY HOUSE



Repurposed in 2007, this building is located at the old centre of Vila do Corvo and stands out by the simplicity of its architecture, which keeps the layout of the original house as well as its extensive use of basalt. This is a physical structure of Corvo Ecomuseum, where a long-term exhibition, titled "Corvo Island – Marks of a Past", is on display. Here, through several movable heritage objects – linked to weaving, agriculture, everyday life, carpentry and joinery – some of the most relevant aspects of the History and Memory of Corvo community are kept.

AND WILD BIRDS INTERPRETATION CENTER



Corvo's Wild Birds Interpretation Center is located in a restored building.

This was once a dwelling house and a chapo, a word coming from the English word shop, and referring to a carpentry shop. In addition to the tasks connected with this craft, this was also a place where friends and neighbors of the owner met to chat and even to read through the night, as they had to take care of the lands and animals during the day.

10 ATAFONA DO LOURENÇO



Lorenço's mill, so-called in Corvo, is the only surviving example of the five mills that existed in the past.

It is considered a testimony of the cereal activity on Corvo island, which for centuries ensured the survival of this community and the payment of taxes to which they were subject.

It is a rustic mechanism, or grain mill, operated by an animal, almost always bovine.

This device was the first and the most used in the milling process, whose operation did not depend on the direction and intensity of the wind.

11 LARGO DO MAROUÇO (SQUARE)



Corvo's society was egalitarian, there were no social strata, for which much contributed the fact that the donee family never lived on the island. Nevertheless, there were two social differentiating factors: age and gender.

This meant that social spaces and tasks varied between women and men and, within this last group, between the younger and the elder.

Largo do Marouço was the meeting point of young boys, who only joined the elders at Largo do Outeiro (Square) when asked to do so; women, on the other hand, only went to public places such as Largo do Outeiro on festive days or when the ship docked and they wanted to see who was arriving. It was also the meeting point for the ones carrying the figures of Senhor dos Passos and Nossa Senhora da Soledade, during the procession of Senhor dos Passos, that took place on the Sunday before Easter. The first figure headed to Rua das Pedras preceded by men, while the second one climbed Rua da Matriz preceded by women.

12 LARGO DO OUTEIRO (SQUARE)



Located at the heart of Vila do Corvo, Largo do Outeiro holds great symbolic value for Corvo's community even today. For centuries, it was the decisions center, taken by the elders who gathered here after a day's work. When Corvo became a village in 1832, the inherent administrative services were installed here. The city hall and the jail, the tax office and the treasury, the agricultural cooperative and the Casa do Povo were installed in this square until they were either extinct or transferred to the village limit, currently considered as the center, due to the significant growth to the west that took place in the last 20 years. Other uses were attributed to the buildings that one can still see here nowadays. The House of the Holy Spirit (the name given to the Império do Espírito Santo) was built in 1871 and is the only one to fulfill today its original function, as a place of worship. The square is still the meeting point among the elders, who come here at the end of the day.

13 DISTINCT HOUSE IN RUA DA MATRIZ



Rua da Matriz, thus named after the church existing therein, crosses the old center of Vila do Corvo almost like a limit, as, to the west, were already located the farming fields. The last houses of the village were built along this street.

Here one can find a house that stands out for showing features that differ from the renowned model of Corvo's typical house. Its large volumetry, its façade oriented to the east with a balcony, as well as the existence of architectural elements, such as wall-pier, cornice and decorated windows, are noticeable and indicate the comfortable financial position of its owners.

This house is thought to have belonged to Captain Pedro Coelho, first mayor of Corvo, and his wife, Mariana Lopes, described to Raul Brandão, during his stay on the island, as someone who wore a cape and boots to the church, when everyone else was barefoot (...). She became the queen of Corvo: she gave advice, could get exemptions, proposed and disposed as she liked. She is thought to be the daughter of the priest João Inácio Lopes.

14 MAIN CHURCH IGREJA MATRIZ



The patron saint of the Main Church of Corvo⁵ is Nossa Senhora dos Milagres. Its figure is of Flemish origin, standing out by its carving and the magnificent adornments it has received over the centuries.

According to the legend, the figure was found in the bay, while inhabitants were looking for wood brought by the sea. It was discovered in a wooden box with the message, in the place I would appear, build me a chapel. This led to the building of Corvo's first chapel devoted to Nossa Senhora do Rosário.

The construction of the current Main Church started in the 17th century, due in part to the on-going complaint, about the run-down state of the existing chapel, by Pastoral Visitors. The same source indicates that, in 1695, the church would already be usable, although it was completed only in 1795.

In 1932 a fire destroyed a large part of the parish archives, which, in addition to the previous city hall fire that occurred in 1867, led to a significant loss of the island and its community's history.

1 MEDEIROS, Carlos – "Primórdios do Comunitarismo numa Ilha Atlântica – o Corvo". In *Boletim do Instituto Histórico da Ilha Terceira*, vol. XLI. Angra do Heroísmo, 1983, pp. 454/455.

2 FURTADO-BRUM, Ângela – *Açores, Lendas e outras Histórias: Lendas do Corvo*. Ponta Delgada: Ribeiro & Caravana Editores.

3 RUY, José – *A Ilha do Corvo que Venceu os Piratas*. Lisboa: Âncora Editora, 2018.

4 Mais informação em CALDAS, João Vieira – "A Casa Vernácula da Ilha do Corvo". In MATOS, Artur Teodoro de, LEITE, José Guilherme Reis (Coord.) – *Retratos Sociais da Ilha do Corvo, Do Povoamento ao Século XIX*. Horta: Núcleo Cultural da Horta / Câmara Municipal do Corvo, 2016, pp. 183-202.

5 Mais informação em PIMENTEL, Fernando António de Fraga – *Nossa Senhora dos Milagres – Padroeira do Corvo*. Corvo: edição de autor, 2016.