Inauguration – 10th March

Moorish Castle with a new Interpretation Centre and the
musealisation of the Archaeology Research Field

- Exhibition of finds from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages
- Scale model and video help enhance visitor understandings of the Castle
- Platforms protect both Christian burial sites and the Moorish period oven and storage silos

Sintra, March 9 2015 – Parques de Sintra tomorrow (March 10th) inaugurates the History Interpretation Centre of the Moorish Castle and featuring the musealisation of the Archaeological Research Site with both integrated into the overall project “Conquering the Castle”.

As regards the History Interpretation Centre of the Moorish Castle, the architectural solution aligned with that of the overall project in opting for steel, glass and acacia wood as the building materials and reproducing that believed to be the original profiles through a reversible structure that stands free of the walls.

Within this space, steel and glass display cases were installed and designed so as to guarantee the security and conservation of the pieces within. A bone dice, a cheese box, a key, a pan, axes in polished stone and Portuguese and Spanish coins reflect some of the pieces on display with their origins ranging from the Neolithic Period of 5,000 B.C. through to the Middle Ages of the 10th to 12th centuries.

Also on display here is a scale model of the Moorish Castle and its surroundings, a video featuring the history of the site and various tablets with detailed and interactive multimedia information about the pieces from each period and available in various languages to ensure visitors can learn more about this monument.

In order to bring about musealisation of the Archaeological Research Site, two platforms were installed in steel, glass and acacia wood (resulting from forestry clearing in the Sintra Hills) to protect the oven and silo structures of the Moorish period (10th-12th centuries) as well as Christian ritual graves (12th-14th centuries) left uncovered for viewing on the
eastern bank of the Castle and thus providing visitors with the opportunity for their observation and interpretation. In turn, the platform adjoining the wall protects a section of the foundations of a Moorish residence and two twin silos each around 3 metres in depth.

**Archaeological and historical data**

The archaeological evidence gathered in the digs taking place between 2009 and 2012 reveal the intensity of the occupation of the Castle and its surroundings in the Christian period (12th-14th centuries), identified through the excavation of the Church necropolis to reveal 33 graves each with more than one individual buried within in addition to an extensive period of Moorish settlement (10th-12th centuries) as proven by the remains of residences and their silos for storing and preserving cereals.

In amongst these Medieval items, there were also many artefacts with a Neolithic chronology with one of the most relevant finds being an intact vase typical of those produced in 5000 B.C. along with other artefacts with a proto-historic chronology such as the ceramic vessel (c. 3000 B.C.) and ceramic pieces typical of the Late Bronze period (c. 1300 B.C.).

Following these intense periods of human settlement, as demonstrated by the archaeological artefacts in the meanwhile recovered, the Castle experienced another golden period with the broad and deep intervention carried out by King Ferdinand II in the 1840s. This spanned the restoration of the Castle's ruins and a huge reforestation project for the surrounding hills and thus resulting in the current landscape.

**The “Conquering the Castle” project**

The “Conquering the Castle” project involved investment of €3.2 million and part co-financed with €600,000 from the Tourism Intervention Program with Parques de Sintra meeting the rest of the cost.

The project provided for the installation of a new Visitor Support Centre, the restoration of the walls and improvements to the surrounding landscape, the conversion of the Guard House into a cafeteria and sanitary facilities and the complete renovation of all other infrastructures. Multimedia devices were installed in the North stables to provide visitor support and help in identifying the respective archaeological structures. Alongside these
interventions, there was an overhaul of the signposting, the gateways and fencing as well as the outdoor furniture.

The project extended to the restoration and opening of the Cistern and the conversion of the Church of S. Pedro de Canaferrim into the Castle History Interpretation Centre and involving the implementation of an architectural and restoration project for both the walls and the mural painting in the *apse*.

The archaeological work began in 2009 on the sites due to host new equipment before then spreading to other areas to broaden, deepen and expand on previous studies. Digs carried out in 1981, 1993-1995 and 1998-2000 had already enabled the identification of Neolithic period settlements, part of the Church of São Pedro de Canaferrim necropolis and the foundation structures of a Moorish residence. These archaeological digs provided for a far better understanding of the respective phases of human occupation of the Castle, its respective periods of construction and its daily living environments.

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Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is an entirely state owned company founded in 2000 in order to meet the challenges arising out of the UNESCO classification of the Sintra Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site. The entity does not resort to the State Budget and the restoration and maintenance of the heritage in its care are ensured by the revenues resulting from sales at its ticket offices, stores, cafeterias and the rental of facilities for the hosting of events. In 2014, the sites managed by PSML (the Park and National Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, the Convent of the Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed approximately 1,928,000 visits, around 86% of whom were international in origin. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, PSML was distinguished with the World Travel Award for the “World's Leading Conservation Company”.

The PSML shareholders are the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finance (representing the Portuguese state), the Portuguese Institute of Nature and Forestry Conservation, the Portuguese Tourism Board and Sintra Municipal Council.

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