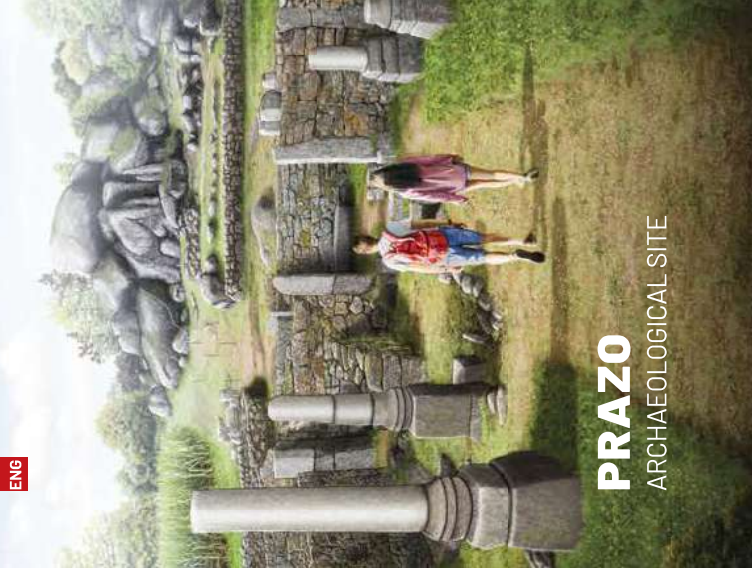




CASTELO VELHO

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

ENG



PRAZO

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

ENG

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CASTELO VELHO

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Located on the summit of an elongated hill, Castelo Velho - dating from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE - consists of a schist enclosure reinforced with clay, organized around a circular layout with successive lines of low walls. Shaped by both the landscape and human activity, this site still holds many mysteries, making it one of the most distinctive archaeoological sites of this period.

Chalcolithic (Copper Age) communities carefully selected this location to build a complex of structures, as it overlooks a vast territory marked by Mount São Gabriel. Integrated into the landscape, these constructions became part of it - in a dynamic of seeing and being seen.

GESTURES, RITUALS, AND MEANINGS
In the upper enclosure and along the access ramp, traces of collective practices of a symbolic nature have been identified, including deliberate deposits of objects - loom weights, copper and gold pieces - and intentionally broken vessels.

Solid tower with an access ramp

Seven circular structures were identified inside the enclosure.

Low wall forming part of the enclosure.

Outer wall, partially preserved.

The exact function of most of the structures identified here remains unknown. However, the organisation of the site and the remains uncovered suggest that this place held special significance for the communities that frequented it.

Ramp or slope built of stone and clay.

Location where human bones were found.

TOWER 1

CENTRAL TOWER

LOW WALL

ENTRANCE

Structure used for storing thousands of seeds.

It was not a permanent settlement, evidence suggests that it may have functioned as a meeting place for different communities in the region, a space for collective practices with a strong sense of identity.

This site was identified during local archaeological surveys in the late 1980s and was soon studied by a team from the Faculty of Arts of the Universidade do Porto. Research revealed a unique monument that was transformed over millennia. Some of the recovered materials are now on display at the Casa Grande Museum in Freixo de Numão.

TOWER 2

This complex originally had several entrances - seven in total. The communities that gathered here would have used all of them; however, it is through this entrance that the visit begins today. Crossing this threshold means entering the heart of the monument.

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Município de Foz Côa

#Feito por humanos raros

PRAZO
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The Prazo archaeological site bears witness to a prolonged period of human occupation spanning several millennia, from prehistory to the present day, reflecting a continuous relationship between the communities and the Douro region. Among the multiple phases of occupation identified, beginning in the Early Neolithic, the Roman period and the well-preserved remains of an early Christian church stand out.

SETTLEMENT
 On the upper level of the site, structures have been identified as an Iron Age settlement, with evidence of grain processing, revealing a new phase of occupation at the site.

In a fertile, sheltered valley, Prazo occupies a plateau on a mid-slope position, characterized by a landscape deeply shaped by human activity. The abundance of springs, fertile land for farming and grazing, as well as the proximity to natural resources and ancient trade routes, help explain why this location was selected and repeatedly reused by different communities over the millennia.

A MENHIR
 The Prazo menhir is one of the earliest examples of the symbolic significance of this place. Dating back to the Neolithic period, this megalithic monument, carved from granite, reflects the social and ritual practices of the prehistoric communities that gathered here. Its presence reveals that, since ancient times, Prazo has been more than just a place of habitation: it was also a place of meaning, memory, and collective identity.

THERMAL BATHS COMPLEX

At the Roman villa of Prazo, there are traces of hygiene and wellness practices, interpreted as thermal baths, evidenced by the presence of water-heating tanks and floors made of *opus signinum* (waterproof Roman mortar).

FIG-DRYING OWEN

A vernacular structure from the early 20th century, this oven bears witness to the continued occupation and reuse of Prazo, now in an agricultural context.

#Feito por humanos raros

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TIMELINE				
EARLY NEOLITHIC (6 th -5 th millennium BC)	IRON AGE (c. 8 th -1 st centuries BC)	ROMAN PERIOD (c. 1 st -3 rd centuries AD)	LATE ANTIQUITY / EARLY MIDDLE AGES (c. 4 th -10 th centuries)	MIDDLE AGES (10 th -13 th centuries)
Archaeological remains indicate the first human settlements in this area, associated with simple structures and symbolic practices, as evidenced by the menhir statue.	The site entered a new phase of occupation, evidenced by residential structures and signs of grain processing, revealing new ways of organising and using the space.	A rural villa-style settlement, comprising a residential area alongside buildings used for economic purposes.	A church is built on top of the villa's foundations, marking the Christianisation of the site and the continued occupation of the location.	The church continued to serve religious and funerary purposes for several centuries, before the site was gradually abandoned as a settlement.
			MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIOD (18 th -20 th centuries)	
			After being abandoned, the site continued to be used for agricultural activities, as evidenced by the fig-drying oven. Agricultural work brought archaeological materials to the surface, leading to the identification of the site and the start of archaeological excavations in the 1960s.	

B EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Built upon earlier structures associated with the Roman occupation of the site, a church was erected, forming part of the Christian reorganization of the region during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. This space served religious and funerary purposes, as evidenced by the graves identified inside and in its surroundings. Throughout the Middle Ages, the church underwent phases of expansion and continued use, before being gradually repurposed for agricultural activities.



Reconstruction based on archaeological findings.