

Theme: 4 Inspiring Landscape
Title: The Tea Hill at the Park of Pena
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Abstract:

35 out of 100 plants survived from the 19th century tea plantation at Pena Park, a 85ha romantic park located at the top of the Sintra's mountain. The park was created by the king-consort Ferdinand II of Portugal, who carried out a major transformation of Sintra's landscape (listed by UNESCO in 1995 as a World Heritage Site). Beginning in 1839 the Pena Park and Palace were built out of the ruins of a 16th century Hieronymite convent, resulting in a master piece on the scale of the greatest European romantic parks, recognised as the pinnacle of Romanticism in Portugal.

In winter Sintra is brightened by Camellia flowers - symbol of several celebrations. In this hilly region ideal conditions exist for the growing of Camellias: acidic soil, mild climate and frequent rainfall. As soon as the landscaping of the park began, Ferdinand II collected a remarkable variety and quantity of camellias (a collection so formidable it was distinguished as "Camellia Garden of Excellence" by the International Camellia Society in 2014).

The Tea Hill (a neglected area of 4,98ha), hosted in 1883 the first tea plantation in mainland Portugal and is currently under restoration by PSML (a state-owned company responsible for managing Sintra's natural and cultural values on an area of 660ha with forests, heritage gardens and palaces).

The tea plantation imprinted on the Park of Pena an scenario evocative of the far-east, structured by a network of paths that climb over the top of the granite cliffs (450m above sea level), where the tea plants grow and prosper in the many cracks of the rocky outcrops. The ongoing project includes works on the original water network, decorative ponds and cascades. To recreate the original ambience, in the context of 19th century romantic landscapes, the project used, as inspiration 13th and 14th century Cantonese illustrations of the different steps in the cultivation of tea in China, as there are key parallels between the Chinese tea landscapes and Sintra's Tea Hill.