

Walk 10: SOAJO • MURÇA • SOAJO

See also photographs on pages 108-109, 112

Distance: 7km/4.4mi; 2h08min (*allow under 3h*)

Grade: moderate. There is an altitude gain of some 250m/820ft, mostly on the climb from the river Adrão up to Murça. Some rough narrow paths in the first part, easy underfoot on tracks and trails in the second half.

Equipment: sturdy shoes or boots, long-sleeved shirt, long trousers, sunglasses, suncream, fleece, raingear, picnic, water, *compass*

Transport: ☞ follow Car tour 3 (pages 35-37) to the *espigueiros* in Soajo. Drive on from the *espigueiros* for another 1.7km, until you come to a bridge by a U-bend. Park here.

Shorter walk: Soajo — Rio

Adrão — *espigueiros* (5.4km/3.4mi; 1h35min; easy; includes some road-walking). Follow the main walk to the 41min-point, where the main walk turns right. Continue straight ahead here and follow the trail back towards Soajo. A simple bridge of slabs is crossed (48min); three minutes later, keep straight ahead. Ignore the trail joining from the right (1h02min). You enter Soajo opposite a house with '1923' on the wall (1h15min). Go to the left of this house, and turn left almost immediately. Keep right at two junctions, to reach the square. Take the exit at the left of the pillory and come to the main road. Turn left, and keep left past the *espigueiros*, to get back to your car (1h35min).

Soajo is a fascinating and thriving village which attracts visitors — particularly to see the *espigueiros*, the granite-built grain stores shown on pages 108-109, which are imposingly grouped together around an open area of rock (used as a threshing and drying floor). It is worth a stop as you drive past to see them. This circular walk explores the steep valley running north from where the car is parked and down which flows the river Adrão. Scenic interest is not lacking at any stage. Heading first up the left bank, the river is crossed on stepping-stones by old farm buildings. There is a long climb up the other side of the valley to the farming community of Murça. Careful navigation through the maze of trails surrounding Soajo is needed to get back to the car.

Start the walk at the BRIDGE (235 m) 1.7km northeast of Soajo: continue along the road and cross the bridge over the Rio Adrão. Then turn left immediately, to join a rough track. There is a steep ascent to tackle straight away — and over stony ground. Stay with the track as it briefly narrows

to a trail and passes just above a small BARN (4min). Just after this you will rejoin the track as it passes through woodland and crosses a STREAM (11min). A short steep ascent follows, and the track swings sharply uphill to the right. Take the path off to the left on this bend (18min) — the track itself

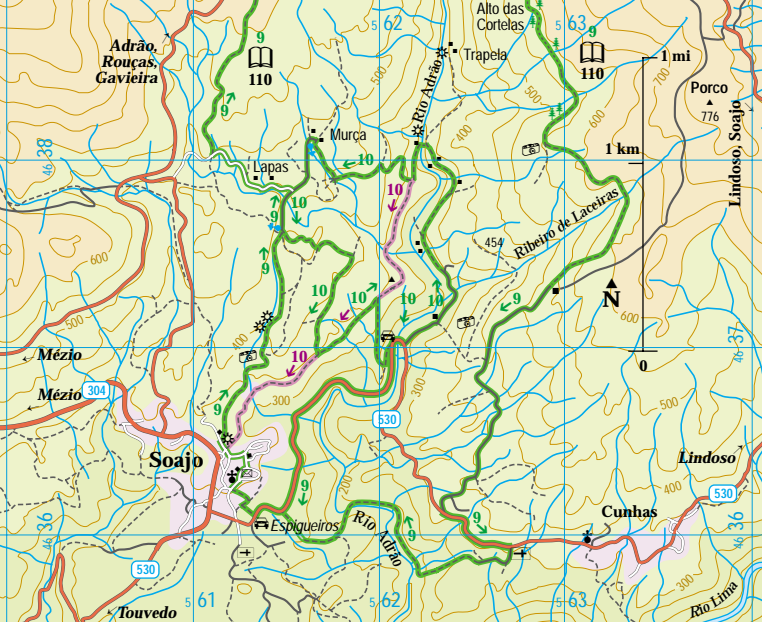
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ends abruptly. The path takes you down through a cluster of old buildings now used as ANIMAL PENS and approaches the river three minutes later. Turn right at the junction of paths here, to climb the hillside again; then keep ahead (24min), ignoring the path joining from the right. You will need to step over a low

wall across the path a minute later, just as you reach a small building on the right. Beyond this point the path becomes a little overgrown, especially as you approach another small building (31min). The path passes to the right of this building, then leads you into a winding descent towards the river. Farmed terraces across

The river Adrão and old terraces





the valley and a watermill and an old farmstead by the riverside catch the eye, as you descend to reach the **Rio Adrão (35min)** at the setting shown below.

Cross the river, which can be flowing fast in spring, on stones. Head for the trail opposite, by the farmhouse (if the trail is blocked with wire netting you can easily climb into the field on the left and then rejoin the path a short

way ahead through a gate). Continue as the trail immediately leads you into a steady climb, with the valley on your left, until you reach the crest of this rise (**41min**). Turn right by a **RED AND YELLOW WAY-MARK**, to enter an old walled-in trail, climbing steeply again and bearing left (**44min**; *no* waymark). Three minutes later, after the trail takes a sharp right-hand bend (waymarked), you're facing the head of the

Waterfall and pools at the Rio Adrão river crossing, first reached in 35min



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valley. Shortly afterwards (**49min**) the trail ends at a wall. Clamber over the wall to continue diagonally left along a path which joins a rough trail two minutes later; follow this to the left. Looking across the valley from here you can see the old granite village of Bogalheira which is visited in Walk 9.

As you approach the cultivated terraces of **Murça (54min)**, the route narrows to a walled-in trail. At a junction of trails reached two minutes later, turn right (waymarked). There is a whole network of walled-in trails around Murça, but navigation is easy. *Ignoring* the waymark indicating left, keep ahead on the granite-paved trail (**57min**), to reach a major junction of trails three minutes later. Turn left here, passing a **WATER SOURCE** on the left. Ignore the two trails heading right (**1h03min**), but turn left immediately afterwards on a broad improved track. This will lead you to a stone **SLAB BRIDGE** (also on the route of Walk 9). Cross to the left and join a track (**1h08min**). In two minutes you emerge in a wide open area with a small **DAM**, where the track becomes a trail. Don't go straight on along the main trail (it leads back to Soajo), but take the smaller walled-in trail heading diagonally left. Soon (**1h13min**) it takes you to another open area. The inclination is to stay with the trail as it swings right towards Soajo, but it is important to *leave* this trail. Cross this open area, following the wall round to the left, and join a trail leading *away* from Soajo and back up the valley (at least initially). Follow the trail as it

swings sharply down to the right three minutes later (in front of a small **IRON GATE** in the wall ahead of you). Continue down to a 'T' of trails (**1h19min**), where you turn right, follow a narrow walled-in trail. There are glimpses of the road below, as you enter woodland. Ignore the trail joining from the right (**1h26min**) but, as you join a main trail two minutes later, turn sharp left: set your back on Soajo once again and start heading up the valley. Continue ahead for a time, crossing a **WATER CHANNEL** and then come to a wider open area in the trail (**1h54min**). Just ahead is a pair of **IRON GATES** on the right. Immediately before them, also on the right, look for a gap in the corner of a wall. Pass through this into the field beyond. There is a water course contouring around the hillside; follow his for 20m or so, then strike off steeply downhill. There is no path here, but head downhill following the line of the wall on your left until (after about 70m) you can go through another gap in the wall. You will emerge on a walled-in path leading downhill. Follow this to a T-junction on a small shoulder (**2h05min**); turn left here and descend to a barn just above the road and the **BRIDGE** northeast of **Soajo (2h08min)**.