

Case Study

Quinta da Mata

Aerial view of the farm (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

1. Introduction

Quinta da Mata is a small family-run agrotourism business with 3 independent houses available (2 two-bedroom houses and 1 one-bedroom house) with wine production activity. On this farm, tourists enjoy a unique space with a magnificent view over the vineyards, and the valley, in the middle of nature that allows privacy and isolation, a stone's throw from the Peneda-Gerês National Park (Portugal's unique and only National Park) and the town of Ponte da Barca. The proximity to the park allows guests to explore its natural wonders and experience the diversity of flora and fauna that characterise this protected region. Tourists have the possibility to take part in the grape harvest and other farm activities.

The journey of Quinta da Mata began with a vision to combine farming and tourism. Despite facing initial challenges, the owners undertook training in agriculture and tourism, leveraging European funds for support. Presently, the agrotourism business revolves around a 4.5-hectare vineyard, producing vinho verde and contributing significantly to the family's income.

NAME OF THE BUSINESS

Quinta da Mata – Trevo do Triunfo Unip. Lda.

LOCATION

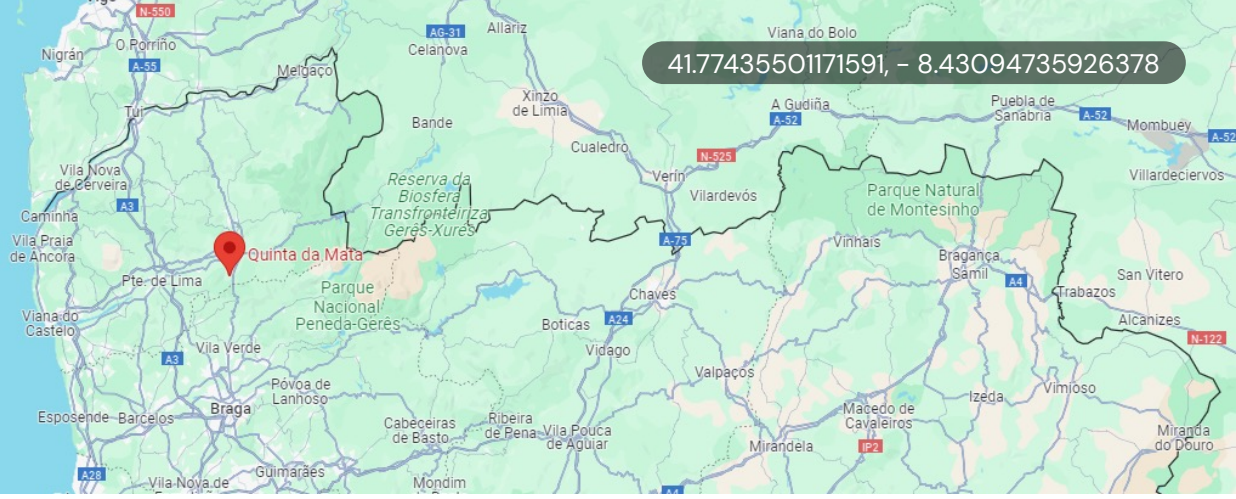
S. Martinho de Castro – Ponte da Barca – Viana do Castelo

2. About the agrotourism

Nestled in the rural beauty of S. Martinho village, in the municipality of Ponte da Barca, county of Viana do Castelo, Quinta da Mata is a 5-hectare farm that has a privileged view of the mountains and natural landscape. The farm is located on a hillside, which offers pleasant views over the valley of the river Vade. Close to the Peneda-Gerês National Park, it is a central point for visiting the main cities and towns of the North and Alto Minho region like Viana do Castelo, Braga, and Porto.



Pond with fishes (image provided by Hélder)



When did the agrotourism business start?

Preparing the start of the activity involved all the bureaucracy needed for the construction project as well as drawing up a support application for European funds. The business started in 2012 and was completed in 2015.

Number of workers

As a family-run tourist farm, Hélder (the owner) is the one full-time worker for both activities (farm and tourism) and they also have 1 part-time worker for the tourism sector.

Some tourist data from the agrotourism

Quinta da Mata operates three fully-equipped houses, comprising two two-bedroom residences and one single-bedroom unit, providing a total of five double beds. The establishment registers approximately 100 annual bookings, spanning a variable duration from short single-night stays to extended month-long accommodations. The business observes a clear high season from June to September, with the remaining months constituting the low season.

This business is open all year round except for Christmas. The service that is provided is mainly accommodation, but they are always available to facilitate activities and suggest routes to get to know the region better. They had tourists take part in the grape harvest, but we haven't explored this product very much yet.

Their clients are mainly families during the school holidays, aged between 30 and 45 with children aged between 2 and 15. There is no established profile for the rest of the year.



Inside the farmhouse – living room (image provided by Hélder)



Outside the "frutos vermelhos" house (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

About commercialisation

At the moment, the only tool they use for marketing is the booking.com portal.

Other portals have been used (e.g. Airbnb, TopRural, EscapadaRural, Tripadvisor etc.) but they ended up focusing on booking.com, which worked best.

Their own website is in the process of being launched.

Wine is only sold on the premises to tourists and locals.



Leisure area (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

About advertising

A promotion strategy investing in social networks, leaflets, and travel magazines is of utmost importance in this area.

With this in mind, and to further enhance their online presence and provide a centralised platform for potential clients, the establishment has undertaken a targeted training course. As a result, a comprehensive proposal has been formulated, outlining the development of a dedicated website. This website is currently being developed.

Recognizing the visual impact of multimedia in contemporary marketing, Quinta da Mata has produced a promotional video highlighting the accommodations and associated services. This visual content is actively promoted through the dynamic and expansive reach of social media, with a particular focus on Facebook. The goal is to engage potential clients, providing them with an immersive preview of the facilities and experiences offered at Quinta da Mata

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/casasdaquintadamata/>
 Promotional video: <https://www.facebook.com/casasdaquintadamata/posts/pfbid0CCBxmim27kTCYo8sbk3QRTC5neEk-vv42URVQNrNCRRm8rnij6qHzm5XnroMEwbXL>

About starting up the business

They opted for agrotourism because there was already a farm associated with the Quinta, so it made perfect sense to try to combine these two activities (farming and tourism). At the time, they had no training in tourism, business nor agriculture. After starting the business, they felt the need to gain more knowledge, so training courses were organised for all activities, through Valedelima (agricultural cooperative) for the agriculture sector and ADRIL (LEADER organisation) for the tourism sector. Also ADERE-PG, as the promoting entity, provided training in languages (French) financed by the POISE program, and Tourism Management approved by the COMPETE2020 program, both funded through the European Social Fund (ESF).



Wine produced in the agrotourism (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

These initiatives reflected a commitment to continuous improvement and a proactive approach to meet the demands of the evolving tourism landscape. In order to implement the business, since they found the processes too bureaucratic, they turned to a consultancy that allowed them to apply for European funding through a PRODERE (Rural Development Program) financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), making it possible to get off to a better start. They received the funding (50% of expenses) from 2013 to 2015.

Six years since its inception, Quinta da Mata reflects on the entire journey as a significant challenge, met with determination and resilience, they feel very motivated to further expand their services. Plans are underway to introduce complementary activities such as wine tasting, themed workshops, guided tours, and more. Although these initiatives are yet to be realised, they embody the continuous evolution and forward-looking approach of Quinta da Mata in offering an enriched agrotourism experience.

About managing an agrotourism business

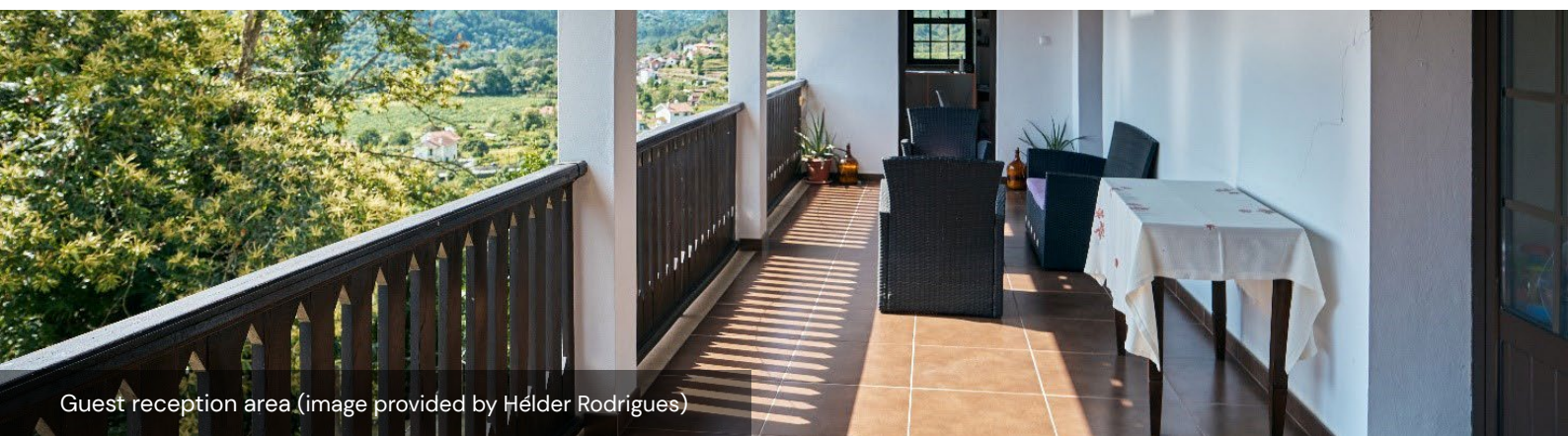
The crop they have associated with tourism is the vineyard spanning approximately 4.5 hectares, corresponding to 90% of the farm area and the production of vinho verde (green wine). The Quinta currently produces around 50 tonnes of grapes, which are used in different ways. A small percentage is used to make Quinta da Mata wine, and the rest is sold to wineries in the region, contributing to the local viticultural economy. Additionally, three more hectares of vineyard are maintained at a separate location.

The agrotourism business accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the family's income. They feel that training of agrotourism professionals is fundamental.

And they felt the need for this training after starting the business. The training areas they consider fundamental are:

- Tourism business management
- Digital marketing
- Social network management
- Digital tools
- Sustainable tourism

Looking forward, Quinta da Mata envisions a trajectory of growth. With ongoing projects aimed at expanding both vineyards and accommodations, the proprietors anticipate a doubling of income in the coming years.




Guest reception area (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

Advice for new entrepreneurs

“My advice to new entrepreneurs thinking about a similar activity is to think exactly as if you were a customer.” – Owner Hélder

“Prepare a business in which you feel good so that you can pass that on to your customers. Get to know the area and its main attractions and contacts as well as possible.” – Owner Hélder

“Always keep your feet on the ground but keep your eyes on the future and the goal of continuous improvement, whether through training or future investment.” – Owner Hélder



Exterior of the main house (image provided by Hélder Rodrigues)

Still Tourism Around Yard



Co-funded by
the European Union

Project N. 2022-1-SI01-KA220-VET-000087663

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