



COVER - Dynamic geomorphological sites like Culbin sand spit on the Moray Firth support changing habitats and spectacular scenery, as well as providing a natural defence against coastal flooding. © P&A Macdonald/SNH. These are discussed further on page 20.



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The Museum of the Portuguese Centre of Geo-History and Prehistory

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This museum, the 'Núcleo Museológico do Centro Português de Geo-História e Pré-História' was founded in 2013 in a former primary school in Golegã, a small town in the middle Portuguese reach of the River Tagus, c. 35 km north of Santarém and 150 km upstream of Lisbon. It comprises a Natural History exhibition and a library specializing in palaeontology, prehistory and archaeology, with over a thousand books and articles in hard copy, as well as digital support. Themes within the exhibition include evolution and Rock Art, as well as interactive media devices and the palaeontological and prehistoric archaeological collections of the Portuguese Centre of Geo-history and Prehistory, a body formed in 1993 and recognized by the Portuguese Government in 2017 as a public institution. Several partnerships have been forged with municipalities, schools and other museums, giving rise to exhibitions, conferences, lectures and seminars.

The central themes of the Museum of the Portuguese Centre of Geo-History and Prehistory in Golegã, are the evolution of life and the physical and technological evolution of humankind. It can be enjoyed by the local inhabitants and by visitors from other locations in the country and abroad and has attracted interest from local and national media (newspapers and television).

The rural Tagus valley location is within an area that has an ageing population, which led to the closure of the school that now houses the museum, the latter providing a new use for the building (only built in 1980, albeit with a traditional style from the 1950s) and a new central point for the village of São Caetano, helped by the small cafeteria that operates within the Museum.



Exterior of the former primary school of São Caetano, Golegã, now the Núcleo Museológico do Centro Português de Geo-História e Pré-História (Main central Portuguese Museum of Earth History and Prehistoric Archaeology). Photo by Centro Português de Geo-História e Pré-História.

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The exhibition, designed as an educational and interactive facility, is divided into five sections:

- Introduction to the geology of Portugal: the main rocks and their relation to industry.
- Evolution of life, consisting of five explanatory panels and three displays with fossils from the Palaeozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras.
- Multi-themed section, with fossil displays, panels, interactive elements and a landscape model. One theme is trace fossils, with trilobite trails, a cast of dinosaur footprints and dinosaur eggs. This can be linked to another theme, dedicated to palaeontology of Cape Espichel, a site on the coast south of Lisbon where sauropod trails can be seen on near vertical bedding plains exposed in the cliffs. There are also themes devoted to fossil invertebrates, to the evolution of the horse lineage (Golegã is considered the national capital of the horse) and to human prehistory, the last with replicas of artefacts and of skulls of *Homo erectus*, *H. heidelbergensis*, *H. neanderthalensis* and *H. sapiens*.
- Section on Prehistory, with archaeological remains, including food-related items.
- The final section is dedicated to rock art, with an explanatory panel and three large rocks on which engravings typical of various periods of prehistory and proto-history have been reproduced, these being prominent in the archaeology of Portugal. One is Palaeolithic and represents horses and abstract figures, one is Neolithic/Chalcolithic, with rock art motifs typical of the Tagus valley (pecked schematic anthropomorphic figures, concentric circles, spirals, and sun like images), and the third is Iron Age, with characteristic incised zigzags, net-patterns, pentagrams and tree branches.



Views of the exhibition.
1-Showcase of the Palaeozoic; 2 – table showing the evolution of tetrapods; 3-Model with the main groups of dinosaurs; 4-thematic showcases with vertebrates, palaeontology of Espichel and the event-toed ungulates.

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The panel dedicated to rock art and three stones with replica of engravings (left) and detail of one of the rock art replicas (right).



The exhibition is designed to be highly visual and attractive to young people and has so far received 1771 visitors between September 2013 (when the museum was inaugurated) and September 2017. Educational events include re-enactments of 'a day in prehistory' (live simulations of various activities of early humans, such as a lunch prepared using prehistoric technology, replica prehistoric tools, fire, ceramics); 'be an archaeologist for a day', in which participants dress as archaeologists, simulate excavation and the study of archaeological materials; or 'be a palaeontologist for a day', with participants studying fossils (or replicas).



1



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The activities: 1 – 'a day in prehistory'; 2 – 'Archaeologist for a day'; 3 – Rock art laboratory; 4 -Palaeontology laboratory.



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