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## Dark Sky® Alqueva wins 2013 Ulysses Award

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### ABOUT



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Dark Sky® Alqueva has won second place in the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNTWO) Ulysses Award for Innovation in Non-Governmental Organisations.

The Ulysses Awards are a range of prizes awarded annually by UNTWO, which has its headquarters in the Spanish capital, Madrid.

It is essentially teamwork, with contributions from a number of experts from several municipal authorities, especially Reguengos de Monsaraz, and from members of the Rota Dark Sky® (Dark Sky® Route), that has helped Genuineland - Turismo de Aldeia (Village Tourism) to move this programme forward to its present success. The initiative was also sponsored by Turismo de Portugal, by the General Directorate for Agriculture and by the Secretary of State for Tourism, who provided institutional support for our candidature for the Ulysses Award.

It is notable that Dark Sky® Alqueva was recently identified by the European Commission as a case study in the document "Enhancing the competitiveness of tourism in the EU - an evaluation approach to establishing 20 cases of innovation and good practice."

More recently still, Dark Sky® Alqueva was highlighted by the prestigious magazine National Geographic as one of the attractions for visits to the Alentejo in 2014.

With the future of the programme in mind, as well as future developments in Science and Tourism, The Astro-tourism Society was created. It is international in scope, and has as its mission the promotion of a deeper knowledge of and a deeper emotional response to science, using tourism to achieve this aim.

A major purpose of Dark Sky® Alqueva, the first place in the world to be given certification as a Starlight Tourism Destination, awarded by the Starlight Foundation, is to bring new life to the Alqueva region after nightfall, enabling visitors to get full enjoyment from this spacious land under a clear and starry sky, allowing them to wander wherever their imagination takes them.

Alqueva offers a nocturnal skyscape that has unique characteristics for a Dark Sky® Reserve. It is within this context that the Lands of the Great Lake of Alqueva Partnership was created. It is coordinated by Genuineland - Village Tourism, the other partners being TGLA - Tourism in the Lands of the Great Lake of Alqueva, EDIA SA., and CCDRA - the Alentejo Regional Coordination and Development Commission. The Partnership's aim is to implement the Dark Sky® Alqueva Programme.

The Dark Sky® Alqueva Programme is a structuring project concerned with sustainable development, and envisages

the European Commission's Agenda for a Competitive and Sustainable European Tourism being applied in the council areas of Alandroal, Barrancos, Moura, Mourão, Portel and Reguengos de Monsaraz. The Programme seeks to respond to challenges such as seasonality in tourism demand, the impact of tourist traffic, improvements to the quality of work in the tourism sector, improvements to the quality of communities faced with change, minimising the impact of both the use of resources and the production of waste, preserving and increasing the value of natural and cultural heritage, making the enjoyment of holidays possible for everyone, and using tourism as a tool for global sustainable development.