
The "Cante Alentejano" (Alentejo Song)

ABOUT



Photo: Turismo do Alentejo

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Portugal has, in its cultural heritage, a very genuine musical expression, unique in the world, the "Cante Alentejano" (Alentejo Song), now recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Sung in choir and without any use of musical instruments, by groups of men and women, the **"Cante Alentejano"** is a popular manifestation which is a feature of several municipalities in the district of Beja, in the region historically known as Baixo Alentejo. However, it was the **Municipality of Serpa** which took the initiative to register it as World Heritage in conjunction with the Alentejo Regional Tourism Entity.

Although it is currently maintained by choral groups, some of them already centenarians, it always happened in informal contexts, while working in the field or during times of celebration. The lyrics speak of feelings and everyday moments.

Although it is not specific to any Genre or social status, it is often associated with the rural classes that formed in a region where agricultural industrialisation and mining extraction developed during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The first choral group arose in 1926, associated with the workers of the Mines of São Domingos, today deactivated. This initiative was followed by a second group in Serpa, in 1927.

When visiting the region, go to the local tourism offices to find out if any show is scheduled, but above all be aware that they can happen spontaneously in any tavern or recreational group, in a moment of relaxation after a day at work. You can also find information in one of the Casas de Cante (literally, 'Singing Houses') created in the wake of the classification as Intangible Heritage of Humanity. For more information, go to www.casadocante.pt and www.facebook.com/CasaDoCanteSerpaPt.

To get some idea of what Cante Alentejano is, watch the film made by Sérgio Tréfaut to back the application to Unesco.