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# The cork

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## ABOUT

### The cork

**Very environment friendly. Natural and soft, keeps the cool and also the warmth when it is necessary, and it is used to create a comfortable and welcoming ambiance. Cork is one of the most characteristic natural products of Portugal and is part of everyday life without even realizing it.**

The stoppers of wine bottles are best known object but there are many articles made of cork: fashion accessories, clothing and shoes, furniture and floor or wall coatings, among others. The recent invention of cork fabric has revolutionized this industry and has highlighted its much appreciated properties: it's resistant, versatile, recyclable, hypoallergenic and has thermal and acoustic qualities. In addition, it has a very simple transformation process in order to be worked.



Para In addition to objects that we use daily, cork is part of the history of Portugal and can be found in many monuments and points of interest:

- in **Convento de Cristo in Tomar**, a World Heritage site, the window of the Sala do Capítulo (Chapter Room) is one of the places well worth visiting for its symbolism and connection to the history of the Discoveries. Among the elements carved in stone we find cork oak trunks, recalling its use in the caravels of the Portuguese navigators.
- the monks knew quite well that cork could make the environment more comfortable. Examples of this are the **Convento dos Capuchos in Sintra**, the **Convento de Santa Cruz do Buçaco** and the **Convento da Serra da Arrábida**, where the cells and some common areas are lined with cork.
- the **18th century nativity sets**, by the sculptor **Machado de Castro**, with terracotta figures in cork scenarios are a reference in the history of Portuguese decorative arts. One of them can be seen in **Basílica da Estrela** in Lisbon.
- in **Sintra**, the **Chalet da Condessa d'Edla** was built and decorated in line with the romantic spirit of the 19th century. On the doorframes, windows and glasses, cork is one of the most striking decorative elements.
- in the Algarve, **São Brás de Alportel** is a location where the cork industry was very important for its development.

Currently it is the centre of a Cork Route.

- the history of cork is also present in local museums, which can be ethnographic such as the **Museum José Régio in Portalegre**, or linked to industrial archaeology, such as the **Ecomuseum of Seixal**.



Portugal is the world's leading cork producer, accounting for over 60% of the volume of world exports, and it has an area of cork oak corresponding to 25% of the area that exists worldwide. So when travelling across the country, especially in the Alentejo, notice how the cork oak is one of the most common trees in the landscape.

#### **Do you know that...?**

As cork is a highly versatile natural product, it allows one to do practically unimaginable things. Take a look at the examples.

#### **A dress for Lady Gaga**

It was with cork fabric from Pelcor that designer Teresa Martins recently worked a complete look that she created for Lady Gaga. Inspired by the music of renowned singer and Klimt's masterpiece, which Vienna paid homage to by celebrating his 150th anniversary, Teresa Martins created a cork dress veneered in gold and silver and hand-embroidered with beads and metallic threads, recreating the textures and compositions that we see in the artist's paintings.

The dress that symbolizes the fusion between fashion, music and art took 2 years to be produced and was offered to Lady Gaga, who used it at an ArtRave after the concert she gave in Lisbon in November 2014. The moment was so intense that Lady Gaga shared it on social networks.

#### **Works of art made of cork stoppers**

After being used on wine bottles, cork stoppers may seem useless, but there are artists that give them a new function and use them to create works of art.

Scott Gundersen is an American artist from Chicago who uses cork stoppers in his works. The first face that he created was that of Jeanne in 2009, with 3842 stoppers and in 2010 he created the face of a friend, Grace. This gigantic work took the artist 50 hours to do and he used 9217 cork stoppers. It is also his way of drawing attention to the importance of recycling and sustainable art.

At the invitation of Tourism of Portugal, Scott Gundersen presented the reproduction of a portrait of King Philip VI and Queen Leticia, at the international tourism fair, FITUR in Madrid. The picture is composed of more than 30,000 stoppers, 2,36m tall and 3.3m long. It weighs about 140 kg.



**Insulation used by NASA**

The Portuguese company Corticeira Amorim is one of the leading partners that provides insulation solutions for NASA.

**A cork Surfboard**

The Hawaiian surfer Garrett McNamara, who surfed one of the biggest waves in the world, has a surfboard made entirely from Portuguese cork. It was a joint effort, in which dozens of professionals from design, research, aerodynamics and materials development, besides Garrett McNamara himself, helped produce the ideal board to endure and surf the giant waves of the Nazaré Canyon.

**Skates with better performance**

An innovative cork skate was developed by Australian producer Lavender Archer Cork Skateboards, with the support of Corticeira Amorim. Its production in laminate cork, with proven benefits in performance, was motivated by the need to reduce the common vibration of traditional skateboards available today in the market.