

Does a classic car tour allow participants to get to know the territory better? The case of the Proença-a-Nova vintage car tour

Pedro Miguel da Silva Fernandes¹.

ABSTRACT

Classic car tours are typical events in several regions of Portugal. The aim of this article is to try to answer the following question: Does a classic car tour allow participants to get to know the territory better? For this, we used a case study, with the participation of the author, the 5th tour of old cars in the municipality of Proença-a-Nova. It is concluded that the realization of events of this nature is an important way of knowing and publicizing the territories in which they are promoted.

Keywords: Vintage car tour, Territories, Gastronomy, Territorial promotion.

INTRODUCTION

The municipalities located in the interior of Portugal, essentially rural territories, are struggling with problems of depopulation, and seek to attract a more segmented tourism, instead of mass tourism, typical of coastal regions, characterized by other types of tourist offers.

Local authorities are drivers of local development (CAMEIRA, 2013, p. 1), they are a driver of territorial offers, they unfold in initiatives to attract tourists to their territories, often even in an integrated way with neighboring municipalities, so that visitors can enjoy a whole set of local offers.

In these regions, visitors get a privileged contact with nature, with all the added value that this entails in terms of health and well-being.

According to GOUVEIA (2009, p. 21), "Undoubtedly, one of the great assets of inland regions is their endogenous resources, which encompass, among other aspects, the natural heritage (landscape, water resources, relevant natural areas with high ecological sensitivity), the heritage

cultural heritage (traditions, handicrafts, gastronomy and "ancient knowledge") and the historical and architectural heritage (monuments, historic villages and mountains) and that form its territorial identity".

The so-called nature tourism becomes essential in territories with low population density. This type of tourism presupposes direct contact with nature (rivers, mountains, caves, etc.).

On the other hand, we must also highlight heritage tourism, aimed at visits to the built heritage in that territory (religious, museum, etc.).

¹ Doctoral student in Geography at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra and collaborating researcher at CEGOT - Centre for Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning



In this context, we can point out some examples of typical local initiatives in territories with these characteristics: walking routes, local gastronomy tastings, wine tourism, astrotourism, boat trips, camping/caravanning. We can also highlight the tours of bicycles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, vintage cars, etc.

When addressing the issue of classic tours, we agree with the opinion of GRAÇA (2019, p. 31), who suggests that "Car tourism is an extremely comprehensive concept, (...)". This article deals with car tourism from the perspective of classic cars, which generate feelings of nostalgia, of going back to the past. Many of these vehicles are owned and driven by descendants of the former owners who want to preserve their memory in this way. These events are also a meeting point for aficionados, a privileged opportunity to assimilate and share knowledge on the subject.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this article is to try to answer the following question: Does a classic car tour allow participants to get to know the territory better?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in this article was based on a case study, which "(...) it is characterized by deep and exhaustive study (...)" (GIL, 2008, p. 57) of the scenario under study, in this case, the 5th vintage car ride in Proença-a-Nova.

Participant observation was used as a research strategy, in which, at first, as CORREIA (2009, p. 32) states, "(...) the researcher seeks to obtain a general perspective of the social aspects, the interactions and what happens in the field, (...)". Therefore, within the scope of this 5th vintage car tour, it was decided for the direct involvement of the researcher, aficionado of the theme, as a participant in the event, and seeking interaction with the other participants, as well as with the respective organizing entities.

In general, the steps suggested by the authors ABIB *et al.* were followed. (2002, p. 607), "(...) research preparation, entry into the field, observation (and analysis), and conclusion (and analysis)."

In the preparation of the research, the following steps were outlined, followed by participation in the event with observation/analysis of the various interactions throughout the day. In the end, the results of the participation in the event were written.

AREA OF STUDY

The municipality of Proença-a-Nova is located in the district of Castelo Branco and is part of the Intermunicipal Community of Beira Baixa. For ALBERTO *et al.* (2023, p. 347), "(...) the municipality of



Proença-a-Nova is marked by a marked rurality associated with structuring urban centers, namely around the headquarters of the four parishes that make up the municipality".

Its composition includes the parishes of Proença-a-Nova and Peral, Sobreira Formosa and Alvito da Beira, Montes da Senhora and São Pedro do Esteval.

In terms of heritage, NETO DE CARVALHO & RODRIGUES (2012, p. 179) suggest that "The municipality of Proença-a-Nova has an important geological heritage framed in the Inventory of the Geological and Geomining Heritage of the Naturtejo Geopark".

According to INE - CENSUS 2021 and MUNICIPALITY OF PROENÇA-A-NOVA (2023a)), its territory, with an area of 395.4 km², consists of 7170 inhabitants, of which 3276 are in the age group of 25-64 years of age, and 2748 in the age group of 65 years or more.

Again quoting words from ALBERTO *et al.* (2023, p. 346), "(...) the municipality of Proença-a-Nova faces the challenge of creating attraction factors that affirm its identity and potential and that help attract and retain new audiences".

The municipality of Proença-a-Nova is rich in varied infrastructures and also endowed with great dynamics in the organization of events. It also has a typical gastronomy and diverse landscapes, ranging from natural landscapes to wind farms. "Knowing, resting, walking, diving, climbing, contemplating, discovering, feeling, savoring, flying, cycling, etc., are examples of the varied choice of what is possible to do when visiting the municipality of Proença-a-Nova" (SERRANO, 2016, p. 7).

In terms of rivers, the beaches of Aldeia Ruiva, Alvito, Cerejeira, Fróia and Malhadal are available to users in the municipality (MUNICIPIO DE PROENÇA-A-NOVA, 2023b). Many of them have earned, over the years, the gold quality medal, a distinction awarded by QUERCUS. On the page of the respective institution, the awards awarded are visible. In the 2023 list, (QUERCUS, 2023), it was found that the beaches of Malhadal and Fróia were awarded a gold medal.

When referring to Fróia beach, SANTOS *et al.* (2010, pp. 16-17), consider that this "(...) It is a good example of the quality of investment in river beaches. Close to two schist villages, Oliveiras and Pedreira, it benefits from a very dynamic and attractive landscape setting, quality equipment and the use of mills for tourism purposes, having been considered one of the ten best projects in the International Environment Award, promoted by the Association of Travel Agencies of Germany".

The Centro de Ciência Viva da Floresta is also an important local hub, it is an infrastructure dedicated to science, inaugurated in 2007 and the result of the partnership between the National Agency for Scientific and Technological Culture and the Municipality of Proença-a-Nova, as can be read in CCVFLORESTA (2023). It is part of the 22 centres of the network of Living Science Centres available in Portugal and is subordinated to the theme of the forest (CIENCIAVIVA, 2023).



Figueira, the municipality's Schist Village, "(...) practically flat and easy to navigate" (ALDEIAS DO XISTO, 2023), belongs to the parish of Sobreira Formosa and invites visitors to return to ancient times. A good example in this context is the community oven, which, according to CARREIRA (2017, p. 47), is "An authentic ex-libris of the village where the social "gatherings" take place, where we can still find its system of scheduling once and for all, a kind of calendar of users".

Hiking trails, mountain biking, climbing, skydiving are also some of the municipality's bets, as can be deduced from the information provided on the municipality's website (MUNICIPIO DE PROENÇA-A-NOVA, 2023c).

At the gastronomic level, the local specialties of plangaio, a sausage based on farinheira, and also the honey bowl, stand out. For this reason, the events "Feira da Tigelada e do Mel" and "Feira de Outono - Festival do Plangaio" are organized every year. According to SERRANO (2016, p. 53), "It can be seen that it is the regular events, especially those related to gastronomy, that attract many people".

Lemon and cherries are also prominent products in the municipality, widely publicized at the "Lemon and Cherry Festival", in the town of Montes da Senhora.

Still on the subject of cherries, more specifically the D'Gustar Cereja program, in the RECONQUISTA newspaper (25/05/2023), it could be read "D'Gustar Cereja has 19 restaurants in the municipality of Proença-a-Nova that, on the 27th and 28th of May and 3rd and 4th of June, will offer cherries to their customers. This initiative has a partnership with the municipality and aims to promote this fruit and the region's producers".

The Municipality recently received the distinction of "Municipality of the Year". According to MUNICIPIO PROENÇA-A-NOVA (24/05/2023), "The Municipality of Proença-a-Nova was awarded with 2 awards and 2 honorable mentions with the 4 projects: the Casa do Resineiro de Corgas was awarded in the category of Culture and Heritage and the Shared Kitchen of Montes da Senhora in the category of Social Economy; the Aldeia Ruiva Playing Fields and the Arts Route received an honorable mention in the categories of sports and cultural tourism, respectively".

ORIGINS OF THE PROENÇA-A-NOVA VINTAGE CAR TOUR

The event was born in 2014 by the hand of the Sports and Cultural Association of Proença-a-Nova with the support of the Municipality of Proença-a-Nova. It has gained followers over the several years in which it has been organized.

In 2017, the "IV tour of old cars in the municipality of Proença-a-Nova" was held. The main responsible for the realization of the event were the Cultural Development Association of Sobreira Formosa and the Sport Clube Sobreirense with support/sponsorship from the municipality and parishes covered.

According to news from the CASA DA COMARCA DA SERTÃO (30/05/2017), "Several locations were visited throughout the municipality, with emphasis on the villages of Figueira, Oliveira, Montes da Senhora, Sobreira Formosa and Atalaias. The tasting of "plangaio", a local specialty, was to the liking of the participants".

THE EDITION OF THE PROENÇA-A-NOVA VINTAGE CAR TOUR (2023)

The 2023 edition, promoted by the Municipality of Proença-a-Nova, with the support of Sport Clube Sobreirense, took place on May 28, with 30 classic vehicles and 75 participants.

The meeting point, and starting point for the event, was the Comendador João Martins Urban Park, (Photo 1), located in the center of the village of Proença-a-Nova, a space in which the Tourist Office and the Municipal Gallery Cafeteria are integrated.

At the Tourist Office, participants were provided with elucidative brochures about the territory. The brochures and itineraries are a way to entice participants to return to the county to enjoy other experiences.

According to ZAIDAN (2009, pp. 58-59), tourist brochures should contain: "Attractions of the destination to be sold", "The facilities that the itinerary offers" and "Ways and means of access to the destination".

The general observation of the material available in this space led to the observation that it presented the characteristics suggested by the previous author.

Photo 1 - Concentration at the Comendador João Martins Urban Park.



Source: Captured by the author during the event

At 9:30 a.m., we headed towards the river beach of Aldeia Ruiva, where a *briefing* of the tour was prepared, in charge of the mayor, Eng^o João Lobo.

Throughout the tour, Photos 2 and 3, participants had the opportunity to enjoy natural landscapes, fields of lemons, cherry groves, olive groves, chestnut trees, religious heritage, typical streets, schist paths (passage in the village of Figueira), various infrastructures and cultural heritage.

Photos 2 and 3 - Contact with nature and diverse heritage during the event.



Source: Captured by the author during the event

At the Tigelada Workshop, based in the town of Pergulho, it was possible to attend a *workshop* on how to make the honey bowl, one of the gastronomic products of excellence in the municipality, Photos 4 and 5. The participants got a sense of how the delicacy is made, as well as had the opportunity to taste it.

On the other hand, it should be noted that this workshop is located in the converted facilities of the old primary school, an effective way to take advantage of the building for new dynamics.

Photos 4 and 5 - Workshop and tasting of tigelada, at Oficina da Tigelada - Pergulho.



Source: Captured by the author during the event

The tour also included a visit to the Living Science Center of the Forest in Proença-a-Nova. Participants had the opportunity to take a guided tour of the center, Photo 6, which meets the expectations of the CIENCIAVIVA network (2023), that is, "To know the contribution of the forest to the maintenance of air quality and the global balance of the atmosphere, to observe forest fires and the measures for their prevention, and to know the water cycle and its relationship with soil protection and erosion, are some of the discoveries of the visit to the permanent exhibition".

Photo 6. Participants visited the Forest Life Science Center.



Source: Captured by the author during the event

During the visit, it was possible to consult elucidative brochures on the theme of the forest and even experience some of the numerous interactive activities present at the center, of which the following can be highlighted: virtual walk to the forest floor, which allows you to visualize the activity of microorganisms; visualize the activity of a factory replica of the pencil, which elucidates how a wooden pencil is produced; smell the scents of nature; observe the water cycle and understand facts about the origin of the trees, their constitution and the various varieties that can be found in the national territory (Photo 7).

Photo 7. Maritime pine aged 115 years (probable age).



Source: Captured by the author during the event

This visit allowed us to learn about relevant aspects about the forest that surrounds the municipality in a very interactive way. Visitors, and their families, may be tempted to come back to take a closer look at the centre and enjoy all the experiences and information that is made available. It can also be said that this dissemination can be a way of attracting study visits within the scope of curricular units in teaching areas dedicated to forestry and tourism.

This was followed by a passage through the typical streets of the Schist Village of Figueira. In this village it is possible to find a communal oven. The atmosphere in the schist villages is a reason for tourist attraction.

Lunch took place in Sobreira Formosa, where it was possible to taste "plangaio", as well as local cherries. Afterwards, the caravan headed towards the Lady Hills, where the Cherry and Lemon Festival was taking place. That afternoon, among other initiatives, there were performances by several folklore groups.

EVENT RESULTS

From all that was witnessed throughout the day of the event, it can be said that the initial question taken into consideration in this study presents a frankly positive answer. On the one hand, it was possible to get to know new territories and infrastructures, as well as new gastronomic products. On the other hand, it was also possible to publicize the county in general and the various places that were part of the itinerary.

In terms of territories and infrastructures, throughout the day, participants had the opportunity to get to know a set of different dynamics of the municipality along the route: diverse landscapes (forest



areas, cherry and lemon fields); typical streets of the municipality and even the schist village of Figueira; religious heritage that they came across; river beach of Aldeia Ruiva (one of the five available for those visiting the municipality); Tigelada Workshop; Centro de Ciência Viva da Floresta and also mingle with the participants/public of another event, held over the same weekend, the Cherry and Lemon Festival in the locality Montes da Senhora.

In gastronomic terms, it was possible to taste various local delicacies (tigelada at Oficina da Tigelada in Pedrulho, plangaio and local cherries during lunch).

From the point of view of dissemination, throughout the event, the interest of the participants in capturing photographs and videos using cameras, *action cams* and smartphones was visible. These contents can take on a future memory function. On the other hand, when they are shared with friends and acquaintances through social networks, they constitute a form of viral marketing with positive impacts on attracting new visitors to the municipality.

The entire itinerary and visits to various places provided by the tour can even arouse the interest of the participants in returning (with friends, family) for a more in-depth visit to the points they consider to be of greater interest.

Although this article is limited to a single tour, it can be said that, in similar events, the results will be equally important from the point of view of knowledge and dissemination of the territory in which they occur. Naturally, each organization of events of this nature traces different routes according to what it considers most relevant in its territory.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The objective of this work was to understand if a classic car tour allows participants to get to know better the territory in which it takes place. To this end, the fifth edition of the Proença-a-Nova vintage car tour was participated in May 2023.

It was found that, throughout the event, the participants had the opportunity to get to know new territories and infrastructures, as well as new gastronomic products. It was also possible to publicize the municipality.

For future work, we can suggest studies, with different methodologies, that address similar events, such as boat trips, off-road vehicles, bicycles and walking routes. Articles based on questionnaires can even be developed for participants in events of this nature, with the aim of understanding the motivations for their participation, as well as their geographical origin.



REFERENCES

- Abib, G., Hoppen, N., & Hayashi Junior, P. (2013). Participant observation in information management studies in Brazil. *Journal of Business Administration*, 53, 604-616. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rae/a/GjkPPmCGpcZQ77CSRQ6s7vQ/?lang=pt&format=html>. Accessed July 16, 2023.
- Alberto, D., Almeida, C. A. M., Santos, D., Quinta-Nova, L. C., & Neves, J. V. M. (2023). Natural resources and local development: A case study of Proença-a-Nova Municipality. In X Congress of APDEA (pp. 346-354). Portuguese Association of Agricultural Economics. Available at: <https://repositorio.ipcb.pt/handle/10400.11/8437>. Accessed July 18, 2023.
- Aldeias do Xisto. (2023). Figueira Tejo-Ocreza. Available at: <https://www.aldeiasdoxisto.pt/pt/aldeias/tejo-ocreza/figueira/>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Cameira, T. P. R. (2013). The Municipality as a Driver of Local Development. Available at: <https://bdigital.ipg.pt/dspace/bitstream/10314/2250/1/GAP%20-%20T%C3%A2nia%20P%20R%20Cameira.pdf>. Accessed July 12, 2023.
- Carreira, M. S. S. (2017). Designing with the Place: Rehabilitation of Houses in the Aldeia do Xisto of Figueira–Arts Center of the Place. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a66906e21ce6eb70620c5aa43b8e1b6a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=y>. Accessed July 22, 2023.
- Casa da Comarca da Sertã. (2017). IV Antique Car Rally of Proença-a-Nova (May 30, 2017). Available at: <https://www.casacomarcaserta.org/news/a4%c2%ba-passeio-de-carros-antigos-em-proenca-a-nova/>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- CCVFloresta – Centro Ciência Viva da Floresta. (2023). Available at: <https://www.ccvfloresta.com/>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Ciência Viva. (2023). Centro Ciência Viva da Floresta - Proença-a-Nova. Available at: https://www.cienciaviva.pt/centroscv/rede/index.php?id_centro=4. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Correia, M. D. C. B. (2009). Participant observation as a research technique. *Pensar Enfermagem | Journal of Nursing*, 13(2), 30-36. Available at: <https://pensarenfermagem.esel.pt/index.php/esel/article/view/32/29>. Accessed July 16, 2023.
- Gil, A. C. (2008). *Methods and techniques of social research* (6th ed.). Atlas Publishing, SA.
- Gouveia, V. D. S. M. (2009). Contribution of river beaches to regional development: The network of river beaches in the Pinhal Interior. Available at: https://run.unl.pt/bitstream/10362/4025/1/Gouveia_2009.pdf. Accessed July 12, 2023.
- Graça, A. M. S. (2019). Car tourism. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ana-Graca-14/publication/354332317_Car_Tourism_Exploratory_Analysis_of_Two_Cases_in_Portugal_Turismo_Automovel_Analise_Exploratoria_de_dois_casos_em_Portugal/links/613206fb0360302a0076fce5/Car-Tourism-Exploratory-Analysis-of-Two-Cases-in-Portugal-Turismo-Automovel-Analise-Exploratoria-de-dois-casos-em-Portugal.pdf. Accessed July 14, 2023.



- Instituto Nacional de Estatística. (2023). Census 2021. Available at: https://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=censos21_main&xpid=CENSOS21&xlang=pt. Accessed July 18, 2023.
- Município de Proença-a-Nova. (2023a). Statistics. Available at: <https://www.cm-proencanova.pt/413/estatisticas>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Município de Proença-a-Nova. (2023b). River Beaches. Available at: <https://www.cm-proencanova.pt/906/praias-fluviais>. Accessed February 22, 2024.
- Município de Proença-a-Nova. (2023c). Leisure Activities. Available at: <https://www.cm-proencanova.pt/109/lazer#visitModule>. Accessed February 23, 2024.
- Município de Proença-a-Nova. (2023d). Proença-a-Nova Municipality receives the Municipality of the Year award with 4 projects (May 24, 2023). Available at: <https://www.cm-proencanova.pt/1217/municipio-de-proenca-a-nova-recebe-premio-autarquia-do-ano-com-4-projetos>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Neto de Carvalho, C., & Rodrigues, J. (2012). Geological heritage of Proença-a-Nova: Characterization and management within the Naturtejo Geopark. *Açafa Online*, 5, 178-230. Available at: https://geonaturescola.com/ficheiros/rotas/1385461893patrimonio_geologico_proenca_nova.pdf. Accessed July 18, 2023.
- Quercus. (2023). List of Golden Quality Beaches 2023. Available at: <https://quercus.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Lista-Praias-Qualidade-Ouro-2023-atualizada.pdf>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Reconquista. (2023). Proença-a-Nova: Municipality helps restaurants with cherry supply (May 25, 2023). Available at: <https://www.reconquista.pt/articles/proenca-a-nova-municipio-ajuda-restaurantes-na-oferta-da-cereja>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Santos, N., Cravidão, F., & Cunha, L. (2010). Nature, cultural landscapes, and associated tourism products. 4th Latin American Congress of Tourist Research. Available at: <https://estudogeral.uc.pt/bitstream/10316/13835/1/154.pdf>. Accessed July 21, 2023.
- Serrano, M. R. (2018). Internship Report. Available at: https://bdigital.ipg.pt/dspace/bitstream/10314/3675/1/M%C3%B3nica%20Serrano_5007917.pdf. Accessed July 23, 2023.
- Zaidan, T. E. (2009). Communication and tourism: A case study on the tourist promotion brochures of Porto Alegre-RS. *Electronic Journal Patrimony: Leisure & Tourism*, ISSN 700X. Available at: https://www.unisantos.br/pos/revistapatrimonio/images/artigos/Artigo4_v6_n6_abr_mai_jun2009_Patrimonio_UniSantos.pdf. Accessed July 24, 2023.