

Once upon a time ... A cache at the National Palace of Sintra (Village Palace), Portugal

This multi-cache has two points:

- The first one in the National Palace of Sintra, **where no container is hidden**.
- The second, where a cache is hidden, about 350 yards from the Palace (walking).

To find the cache you must visit the Palace bearing the story below and find answers to the questions therein. The story was created having children in mind but certainly many Geocachers will also appreciate it. The story takes place at the beginning of the 20th century and, although elaborated with care, it lacks historical accuracy.

The container, at the final location, has geogifts: Rings.

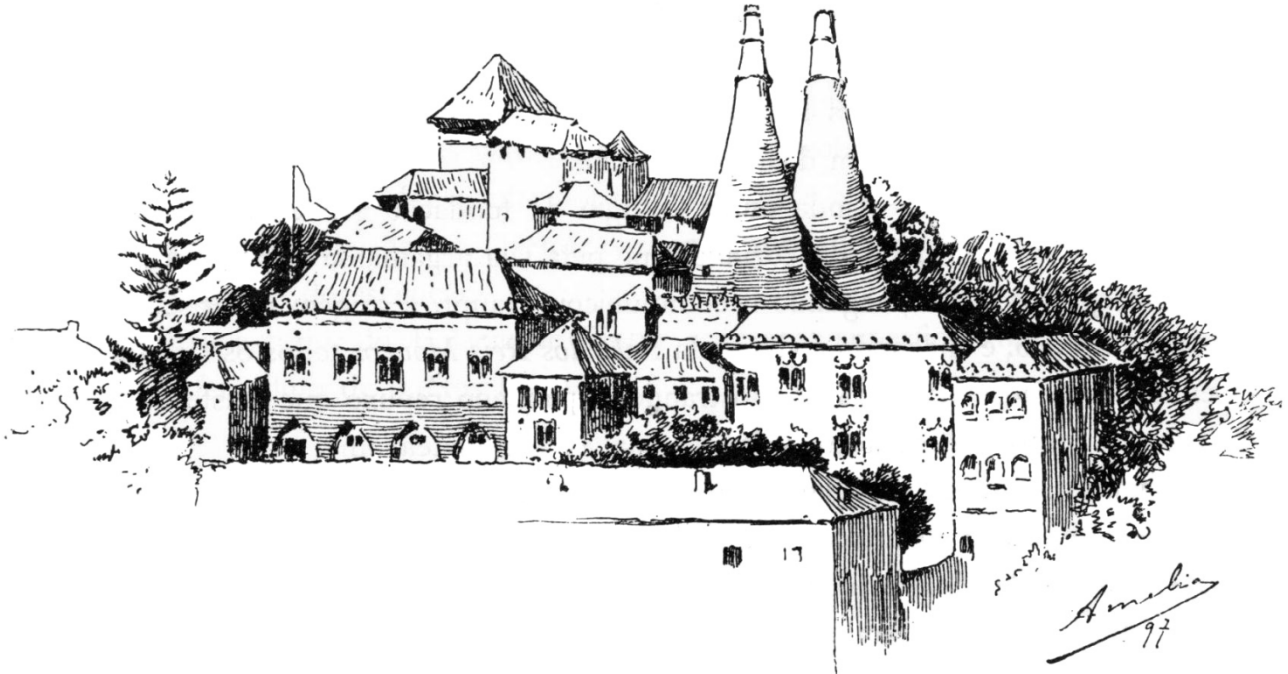
We ask you that for each ring you take leave another in its place. Our desire is for rings to be the exclusive gifts and that everyone who finds the cache will find rings to choose from. (Travel Bugs and Geocoins are also allowed, of course).

When you hide the container back, please make sure that it's not visible from across the street.

We ask for special care in the photos that you publish. Any photos that disclose the whereabouts of the cache or the answers to the questions are not welcome. Knowing the zone where the container is, it won't be difficult to find it without having visited the Palace but this is not the purpose of this cache. We appreciate your understanding.

Have fun!

Once upon a time...



My name is Maria and I work as a waitress at the Royal Palace of Cintra.

I grew up with my grandparents, in a village, where my beloved mother visited me whenever she could. For some time now, she didn't come but she wrote me letters for I know how to read, write and count.

I do not know who my father is but I know he has enemies. That is why I was raised in the village and never saw him yet.

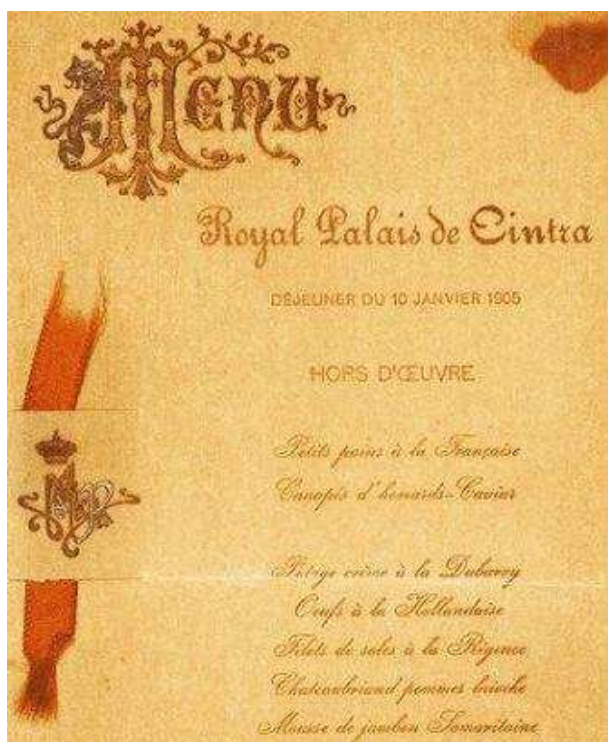
In her last letter, my mother wrote that she and my father had to leave on a journey and that I am no longer safe with my grandparents. I have to, in secrecy, find my father's family and, so that they know who I am, show them a special ring. This ring is hidden in Cintra and in my mother's letters are the clues to find it.

I'm ten, already. I'm grown up and I can take care of myself. When I read what my mother wrote I grabbed her letters, said goodbye to my grandparents and came to look for my father's ring.

All the clues to find the ring refer to the inside of the Royal Palace of Cintra.

Now you know why I am a waitress in this palace.

Swan Hall



Today, Their Majesties held a banquet. It was so big that the enormous Hall of Banquets - the Swan Hall - was completely full and even I was ordered to serve there. When I entered the room I almost dropped the platter I was carrying when I saw so many ladies and so many gentlemen in fine clothes, eating and talking to the sound of such beautiful music. Even worse was when I looked up at the ceiling and couldn't take another step, I only wanted to be there and gaze at it. In my mother's letters I had read about the beauty of this room but to see it with my own eyes was another thing. As I stared at the ceiling it seemed I could hear my mother tell the story she had written:

Dear Maria, there was this beautiful princess, a long time ago, that did not marry when her marrying age came upon her. The years passed by and the princess remained unwed. This worried her parents, the King and Queen, but also cheered them because they were very fond of the princess. Some years later the princess finally got married and went to live with her husband. His Majesty, the King, longing for his daughter, ordered her favourite birds - swans - painted in the ceiling of the hall: one swan for each year of age the princess had when she got married.

When you come here, Maria, you must discover how old the princess was when she got wed.

Also take notice of the cupboards: three of them have written the year of their make. Can you see how old they are?

It's still hard to believe the princess was so old when she got married!



The age of the princess when she got married:

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
|--|--|

Year in the oldest dated cupboard :

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

Year in the most recent dated cupboard:

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

Water Grotto

At the day of the banquet I accomplished well the tasks that were given to me, thus I am now trusted to take duties at any place in the palace.

Now I'm going to the Water Grotto. My mother wrote in a letter that this is her favourite place:

Of all the places in the palace, my dear Maria, the one I most enjoy is the Water Grotto.

In the hot summer afternoons it's cool in here! I sit down at one of the corners and look at the beautiful jars of flowers, the majestic peacock and the beautiful angels painted in the walls.

Other people come here and gaze at the ceiling with the Creation of the World depicted in its centre. They become so absorbed that they're caught by the jets of water that spout from the walls. They leave wet and I stay laughing.

In the four corners of the ceiling are the four seasons of the year. Can you identify them?

The name of the two seasons farthest from the entrance
(first the one on the left followed by the one on the right, as you enter the grotto):

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

The Water Grotto is so beautiful and amusing that maybe it will be my favourite place too, but there are many rooms that I've not seen yet.

Magpie Room

When I entered the Magpie Room I just kept looking at the tiles that seemed to be forming ever changing patterns of flowers, but I knew that I had to look up to the ceiling. This is the story that my mother wrote to me:

Came a day, the Queen and the court ladies were walking the gardens in the company of His Majesty João I. At the front strolled the Queen followed, behind everyone else, by the King talking to Lady Mécia - the most graceful of the court ladies. On the lady's shoulder went the magpie that the King had captured in his hunting.

His Majesty picked a rose and, flirtingly, offered it to Lady Mécia but the magpie stole it and flew away with it on a foot. Surprised, the lady cried out and everyone turned towards her. The jealous Queen looked at the King with a distrustful air and His Majesty justified himself saying "Was for good! Was for good". The magpie, flying around, repeatedly croaked the King's words. Then, the Queen laughed at the magpies' silliness and all ended well.*

Dear Maria, look at the ceiling of this room and see what the magpies carry in their feet and what they say with their beak.

* "Foi por bem" in Portuguese.

Others tell the tale that the Queen saw the King kissing one of the court ladies in this room. When His Majesty said it "was for good", the other ladies spread the event through the palace as if they were jays. To punish them, the King had the ceiling of this room thus painted.

Maybe these are just tales but the truth is that the motto of King João I is what the magpies have in their beak.

Motto of King João I:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| 5 | | | | | | | 6 |
| | | | | | | | |



Mermaid Room

I put some clothes in the wardrobe and there they were - the mermaids! While I was putting the clothes away I kept looking up at them, and they kept looking down at me. It seemed I could hear their music and their singing, weaving enchantments.

So much so, that I came away dreaming of the clothes I would wear after finding my parents. Of course that later I had to go back because I had forgotten what my mother had written in a letter: to look for the number above one of the doors!

Number above one of the doors in the Mermaid Room:

| | |
|---|--|
| D | |
| | |

Blazons (or Arms or Deer) Hall

I'm finally going to enter the Blazons Hall.

I am very curious because my mother's letters tell of the importance of the Royal family and of the noblemen who serve it, but also of my favourite game: going around in a circle holding hands.

Maria, my darling, when you enter the Blazons Hall look at the ceiling and watch the magnificence of the kingdom of Portugal. At the very top and centre is the blazon of the King, His Majesty Manuel I, crested with an invincible dragon. Around it are the blazons of the infants - his eight succeeding scions. Notice that the princesses only have half of the blazon. Of them all, my two favourite ones are those that border Infanta Beatriz and Infante Afonso.

Below are the blazons of the most important noble families. Each family has its coat of arms supported by one of the beautiful deer that the King hunted in the mountain range of Cintra. Each deer has, between its antlers the crest of the family.

Notice that a blazon is lacking: it's the Rabbit's*. Many say it was ordered to be taken down for the family had fallen in disaster. But the truth is that what fell was the painting because it rotted. On the other hand, the Távoras were accused and condemned for treason and therefore their arms and crest have been scraped away.

These noble families are powerful, but take a look at the tiles around you and see that they are also graceful. Can you discover how many ladies are holding hands playing your favourite game?

* "Coelhos" in Portuguese.

Number of ladies in the Circle:

| |
|---|
| E |
|---|

Name of Marias' mother's favourite infants
(first the one next to Afonso followed by the one next to Beatriz):

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

I wonder if one of these is my father's family. Could he be one of the important nobles of the kingdom? Could his enemies' blazons be here as well? I came away praying that both my mother and father are well.

Guest Room (dining room when Maria was a waitress)

I come often to this room to help serve Their Majesties' dinner. I like it very much to be here and hear the clock chiming, although I've not yet decided which of the chimes I like the most.

My beloved mother told me to take note of the name of the chimes written at the bottom of the dial to the right.

At the bottom of the top-right dial:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|--|--|--|--|--|----|--|--|--|--|--|----|--|--|--|--|
| 10 | 11 | | | | | | 12 | | | | | | 13 | | | | |
|----|----|--|--|--|--|--|----|--|--|--|--|--|----|--|--|--|--|

Kitchen

I remember well to see from afar the chimneys of the Royal Palace when I was coming to Cintra. As they grew bigger and bigger, with my approach, so grew the fear that my service wouldn't be accepted. How could I, then, answer my mother's questions? How should I find the ring that grants me access to my father's house? What would become of me?

To my great joy I was accepted. So, in that day, I entered in this beautiful palace for the first time through its kitchen door, clutching my mother's letters against my heart.



In the kitchens, my dear Maria, there is a constant bustle! It's a never ending of food making, dish washing and pot rubbing.

There are two ovens, several roasting spits, a special oven to keep the food hot and can you imagine how many cooking fires? Do not mistake yourself when counting them, Maria!

In this palace, where so many rooms have beautiful ceilings, the kitchen has none - it's all chimneys! And how different they look from the inside!

In one of the chimneys are the royal arms of Portugal and Saboia, in Italy, where the most charitable Maria Pia came from. Below the blazon are words exhorting the Portuguese to fight for their Faith, their King and their Homeland. The Portuguese are addressed by their former name in the Roman Empire, can you find that name?*

* Queen Mother at the time.

Number of cooking fires in the kitchen:

| | |
|---|--|
| F | |
|---|--|

Ancient name for the Portuguese people (first word of the inscription):

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|----|--|
| 14 | | | 15 | |
|----|--|--|----|--|

I'm going to miss this kitchen.

Although there's always much to do, it's never cold in here and I have made friends. But I already have all the answers and so it's time to be on my way.

To get the final point coordinates and the hint, should you desire it, just fill in the following spaces with the numbers and letters of the answers.

Coordinates:

N 38° 47,

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | C | D |
|---|---|---|

 W 9° 23,

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E | B | F |
|---|---|---|

Hint:

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 14 | 5 | 1 |
|----|---|---|

| | |
|----|----|
| 15 | 12 |
|----|----|

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| 2 | 13 | 6 |
|---|----|---|

| | | | |
|----|---|---|----|
| 11 | 3 | 4 | 11 |
|----|---|---|----|

| | | | |
|----|---|---|---|
| 10 | 8 | 7 | 9 |
|----|---|---|---|

The Farstriders