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PRESS RELEASE

European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award 2023 for Cláudio Torres from Portugal, in the category "Heritage Champions"

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The [European Commission](#) and [Europa Nostra](#) have announced today the **winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2023**. This year, 30 outstanding heritage achievements from 21 countries have been awarded **Europe's top honour in the field** (see the full list below). **Among this year's winners is Cláudio Torres from Portugal**, who has been awarded for his remarkable achievements in fostering the appreciation and conservation of Islamic heritage in Portugal for over more than 45 years in which he and the research centre created by him, Mértola Archaeological Site, played a pivotal role.

The 30 winners were selected by the [Jury](#), composed of heritage experts from across Europe, upon evaluation by the [Selection Committees](#) that are responsible for examining award applications, which this year were submitted by organisations and individuals from 35 European countries.

Cecilia Bartoli, the world-renowned mezzo-soprano and President of Europa Nostra, stated: *"I warmly congratulate this year's winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards on their well-deserved recognition. They are inspiring examples which truly contribute to building a more beautiful, sustainable and inclusive Europe. Their success stories demonstrate how adversity can be overcome through pooling expertise, dedication, creativity and innovation. I look forward to meeting them in person and celebrating all the winners at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony in our beloved World Heritage City of Venice".*

The winners will be celebrated at the **European Heritage Awards Ceremony** on **28 September** in the [Palazzo del Cinema](#) in **Venice**. This prestigious event will be honoured with the participation of **Cecilia Bartoli**, President of Europa Nostra. **Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President of the European Commission, is also expected to attend this high-level event. During the ceremony, the **Grand Prix laureates** and the **Public Choice Award winner**, chosen from among this year's winners and entitled to receive €10,000 each, will be announced. The ceremony will be a highlight of the [European Cultural Heritage Summit 2023](#), organised by Europa Nostra with the support of the European Commission, on 27-30 September in the World Heritage City of Venice.

Heritage supporters and enthusiasts are now encouraged to **discover the winners and vote online to decide who will win the Public Choice Award 2023**, entitled to receive a monetary award of €10,000.

Cláudio Torres, PORTUGAL

The archaeologist Cláudio Torres has dedicated his entire life to revealing the legacy of Islamic heritage in Portugal. As an educator in **Medieval History** at the **University of Lisbon**, Torres noted that though there was a significant Islamic presence in Portugal for a period of 500 years, this was not duly reflected in historical study of the time. This led to his research in Mértola, a small village in the southeast of Portugal, where he established the **Mértola Archaeological Site (CAM)**.

The old city of Martulah (or Mértola) had been an important city in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, but its status later declined and was largely forgotten. Excavations initiated by Cláudio Torres in 1978 uncovered a wealth of discoveries which have reshaped understanding of the site for the contemporary world and revealed important links across the Mediterranean. Among the discoveries were a necropolis dating from the Late Middle Ages, an intricate Islamic district and an impressive Paleo-Christian religious compound, along with two 6th-century baptisteries and mosaics with strong Byzantine influences.

These fascinating excavations proved to be the catalyst for a 45-year period of research. Museum exhibits were developed, dozens of books and catalogues were published, and a journal in medieval archaeology was launched, among other initiatives.

Mértola has become a regular destination for academics and researchers. It has hosted international conferences and many researchers visit the village and its archaeological site, especially from Tunisia and Morocco. Several generations of archaeologists, historians, anthropologists and curators-restorers, among others, have trained there.

The research centre and extensive library created by Cláudio Torres in Mértola includes a research unit run in collaboration with the **Universities of Coimbra and the Algarve**. The **Islamic Festival in Mértola**, held every two years and celebrating its 11th edition in 2023, has strengthened links with other countries that share Islamic history and culture. The small village in the Alentejo region, with little more than 1,000 inhabitants, has attracted thousands of visitors each year, resulting in a boost in the tourism economy. A renewed pride and sense of stewardship has also been encouraged among the local community. Among his achievements, Cláudio Torres' was also involved in the creation of the **Guadiana Valley Natural Park**, of which he was the first Director.

“As a bridge builder between Islamic and Christian cultures, Cláudio Torres has played a pivotal role in fostering the appreciation and conservation of Islamic heritage in Portugal, which has immense importance for Europe’s cultural heritage as a whole and which deserves to be acknowledged and cherished. He has gone beyond conventional archaeological practices and actively involved the local community in safeguarding and celebrating their shared heritage. He has thus become a source of inspiration for many”, the Awards’ Jury stated.

“Cláudio Torres’ remarkable achievement of having the Low Guadiana Valley listed as a national park highlights his holistic vision linking archaeology, natural and cultural heritage and local development. His support for teamwork and collaboration has been instrumental in his success, bringing together professionals and creating a cohesive team that remains rooted in Mértola,” the Jury concluded.

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To find out more about this project click [HERE](#) or [HERE](#) or visit our communication channels on social networks such as [FACEBOOK](#) or [INSTAGRAM](#).

**From Norway to Portugal, from France to Ukraine:
these are the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2023¹**

Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

[Steam Engine Brewery, Lobeč, CZECHIA](#)

[Friluftsskolen Open-Air School, Copenhagen, DENMARK](#)

[Hôtel de la Marine, Paris, FRANCE](#)

[Royal Gardens of Venice, ITALY](#)

[Museum of Urban Wooden Architecture, Vilnius, LITHUANIA](#)

[Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary’s Basilica, Kraków, POLAND](#)

[Mudéjar Ceilings of the Cathedral of Funchal, Madeira, PORTUGAL](#)

[Deba Bridge, Gipuzkoa, SPAIN](#)

[Ruins of the Monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza, Gradeles, SPAIN](#)

Research

[Scientific-Archaeological Studies for the Preservation of Erebouy, ARMENIA/FRANCE](#)

[Proto-Industrial Architecture of the Veneto in the Age of Palladio, ITALY](#)

[Safeguarding of the Artisanal Fishing Technique “Arte-Xávega”, PORTUGAL](#)

Education, Training & Skills

[MADE IN: Crafts and Design Narratives, AUSTRIA/CROATIA/SLOVENIA/SERBIA](#)

[ACTA VISTA, Marseille, FRANCE](#)

[Carpenters without Borders, Paris, FRANCE](#)

¹ The winners are listed alphabetically by country

[National Centres for Restoration of Historic Vessels, NORWAY](#)
[Pathfinders of the Waters, Danube Delta, ROMANIA](#)

Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising

[Village Square Meer, Antwerp, BELGIUM](#)
[Budapest100, HUNGARY](#)
[Museum of Literature Ireland \(MoLI\), Dublin, IRELAND](#)
[Open for You, ITALY](#)
[ALMADA Project, Lisbon, PORTUGAL](#)
[Via Transilvanica, ROMANIA](#)
[Un-archiving Post-industry, UKRAINE](#)

Heritage Champions

[Hambis Tsangaris, CYPRUS](#)
[Sergio Ragni, ITALY](#)
[Cláudio Torres, PORTUGAL](#)
[Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online \(SUCHO\), UKRAINE/INTERNATIONAL PROJECT](#)

Europa Nostra Awards 2023 for outstanding projects from the UK

This year, Europa Nostra Awards go to two remarkable heritage projects from a European country not taking part in the EU Creative Europe programme.

[Cleveland Pools, Bath, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse)
[MINIARE: The Art & Science of Manuscript Heritage, Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Research)

Two decades of showcasing heritage-related excellence in Europe

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. For 21 years, the Awards have been a key tool to recognise and promote the multiple values of cultural and natural heritage for Europe's society, economy and environment.

The Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices in Europe, encouraged the cross-border exchange of knowledge and connected heritage stakeholders in wider networks. The Awards have brought major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, additional funding and increased visitor numbers. In addition, the Awards have championed a greater care for our shared heritage amongst Europe's citizens. For additional facts and figures about the Awards, please visit the [Awards website](#).

The Call for Entries for the 2024 edition of the Awards is now open. Applications can be submitted online through www.europeanheritageawards.eu/apply. Submit your application and share your know-how!

Background

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. It is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, covering over 40 countries. It is the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Founded in 1963, Europa Nostra celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered Programme](#). It celebrates and disseminates excellence through the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#). Europa Nostra actively contributes to the definition and implementation of

European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the [European Heritage Alliance](#).

Since 1 May 2023, Europa Nostra has led the European consortium selected by the European Commission to run the [European Heritage Hub](#) pilot project. Europa Nostra is also an official partner of the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative developed by the European Commission, and is the Regional Co-Chair for Europe of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the EU programme that supports the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe's society, economy and living environment. With a budget of €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations in the fields of heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music, and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, cultural and audiovisual professionals.