Quinta da Regaleira

Sintra, Portugal

Photographs by Alan Ward 2025

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The *Quinta da Regaleira* is a residence and garden composed of a series of scenographic effects that reflect the idiosyncratic tastes of both its owner and designer. It is one of the most unusual and mysterious landscapes of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, that has survived intact, just outside the historic center of Sintra. The wealthy owner, António Augusto de Carvalho Monteiro (1848-1920), originally from Brazil, moved to Portugal along with his wife in 1876. He was an intellectual and bibliophile who studied botany and zoology, helping to found the Lisbon Zoo. Carvallo Monteiro was a follower of Christian Military Orders as well as Hebrew prophets, and was a great collector of butterflies, rare manuscripts, and musical instruments. He was a lover of music, particularly the opera, where he likely met Luigi Pietro Manini, whom he later selected to be the designer of the architecture, interiors, and landscape at *Quinta da Regaleira*.*

Luigi Pietro Manini (1848-1936) was a stage designer at La Scala opera house in Milan, until moving to Portugal in 1879 to become the lead designer at *Real Teatro São Carlos* in Lisbon. Carvalho Monteiro asked Manini to design his property in Sintra, after rejecting a design by a French architect. At forty years old, Manini had shifted to architecture, having designed several residences near Sintra. He approached the design of buildings and landscapes as if he were making stage sets, with his own personal taste introduced by making contrived places based on myths and stories from the past. Manini revived the style of late Portuguese Gothic for the *Palácio* (1,4,6,7), which was positioned at the lowest elevation of the mountainside site, on the foundations of an earlier house. Manini retained several other existing structures and paths, including the *Via Sacra*, originally a route built for pilgrims going to the top of the mountain. A pedestrian entrance, or *loggia* (2), along the street connects up a flight of steps to the 100m long Promenade of the Gods (3,10), that leads to an entry stair of the residence (4). A second entry for vehicles is further along the street at a courtyard with a chapel that is at the main level (6).

A broad path from the house and chapel ascends the slopes with switchbacks to connect to a series of remarkable settings, including an initiatic well, a cylindrical opening in the earth with a helicoidal staircase, that descends on a symbolic journey used in initiations (34,35). The route, probably inspired by Dante's Inferno, descends about 27m to a tunnel, which leads to the light at the *Laga da Cascata* (lake and waterfall), at a lower elevation on the site (36-39). Manini composed several other elaborate scenes, including terraces (10,20), pools with bridges (11-13), fountains (14-16), Gothic towers (21-22), grottoes (38), and a ziggurat (26-27). Smaller winding paths, some barely one meter wide with irregular stairs, are cut into the steeper grades, offering multiple routes through this varied and complex landscape (30,33). As a stage designer, Manini had a holistic vision for the house and landscape, and complete control over the visual design, as well as the lighting and sound, to transform the mountainside into a choreographed sequence of experiences that was the setting for the life of Carvalho Monteiro and his family, friends and visitors.

List of Photographs

1. Approach to the *Palácio* from Sintra
2. *Pisões Loggia*, pedestrian entry on the street from Sintra
3. *Patamar dos Deuses*, Promenade of the Gods
4. Stair to the *Palácio* at terminus of the Promenade of the Gods
5. Entry courtyard to the *Palácio,* at the main level
6. View from balcony of the *Palácio*
7. *Casa da Renascença*, *Capela (*chapel), and *Palácio*
8. *C*hapel, Moorish Castle from 8th or 9th centuries beyond
9. Interior of chapel, constructed 1903-10
10. Overview of the Promenade of the Gods, artificial lake on left
11. Path to artificial lake, Sintra in background
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13. Artificial lake, bridges, view to chimneys of National Palace
14. Path to *Balneário,* spa building with two rooms
15. *Balneário,* existing building renovated by Manini
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17. Switchback path with stone walls
18. *Fonte da Abundância,* along *Via Sacra* from early 19th century
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20. Terrace of the *Fonte da Abundância*
21. Switchback path and *Torre da Regaleira,* ca. 1904
22. Path and tower
23. Seat built into hillside along switchback path
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25. Upper level of the *Portal dos Guardiães*
26. Upper level of the *Portal dos Guardiães* and *Zigurate*
27. Central tower of *Portal dos Guardiães* and *Zigurate*
28. *Portal dos Guardiães* with cistern below plaza
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30. Stone steps cut into mountainside
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32. Broad path to top of mountain and stone arches
33. Narrow stone path
34. View down in the initiatic well with helicoidal staircase
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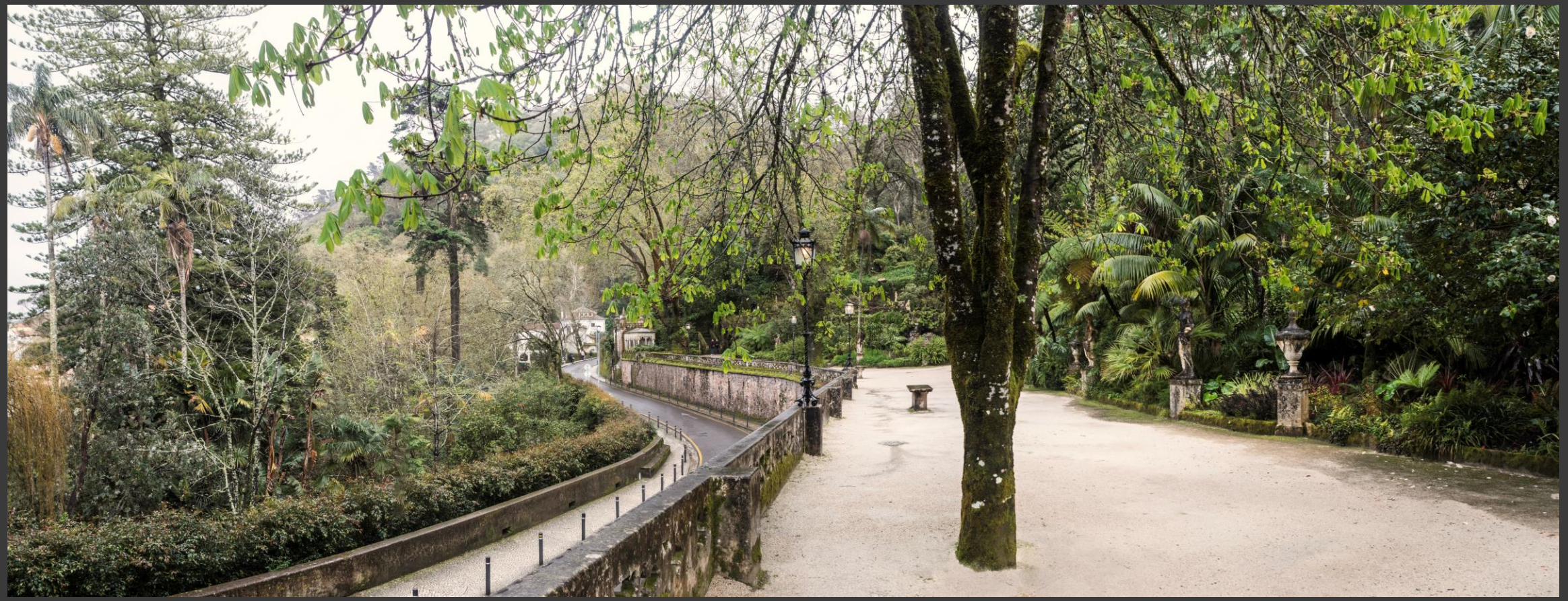
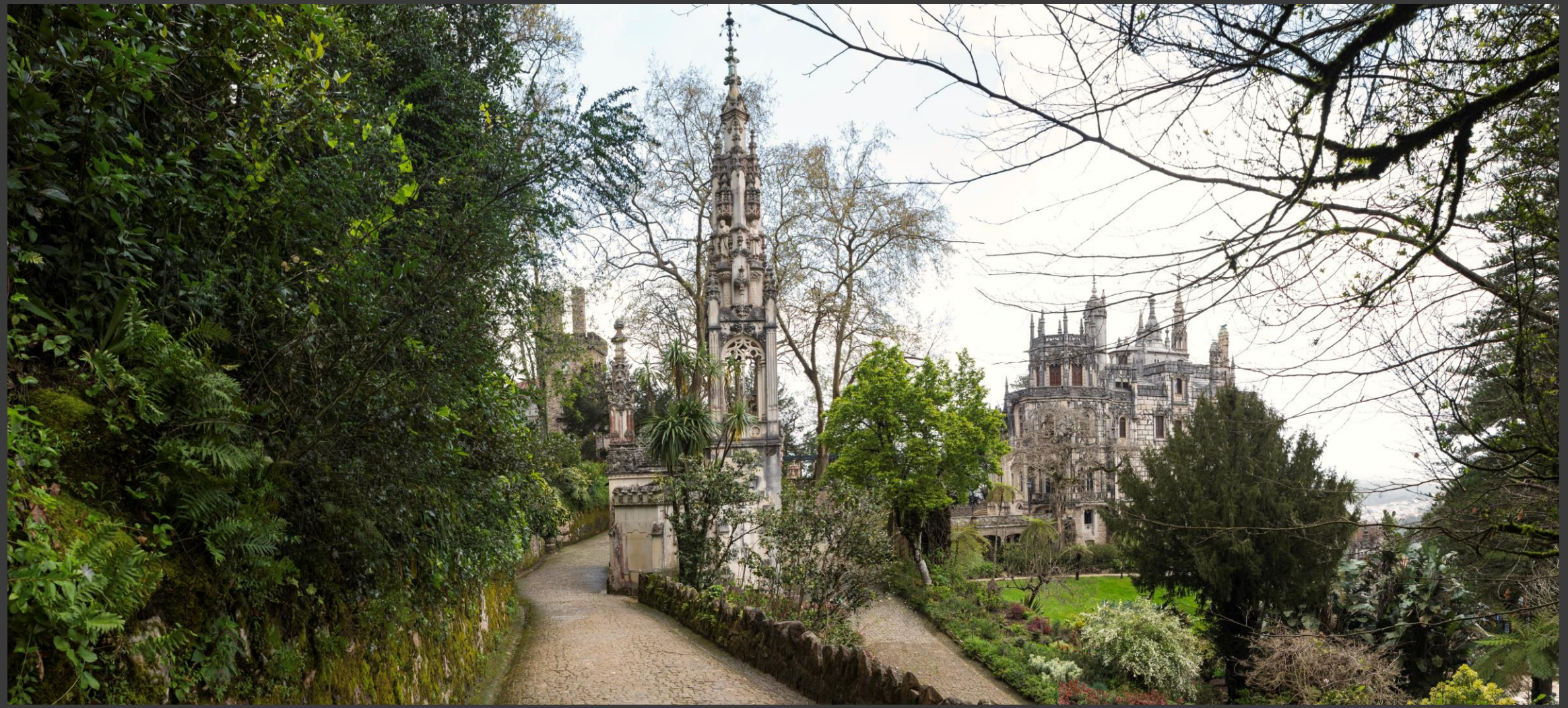
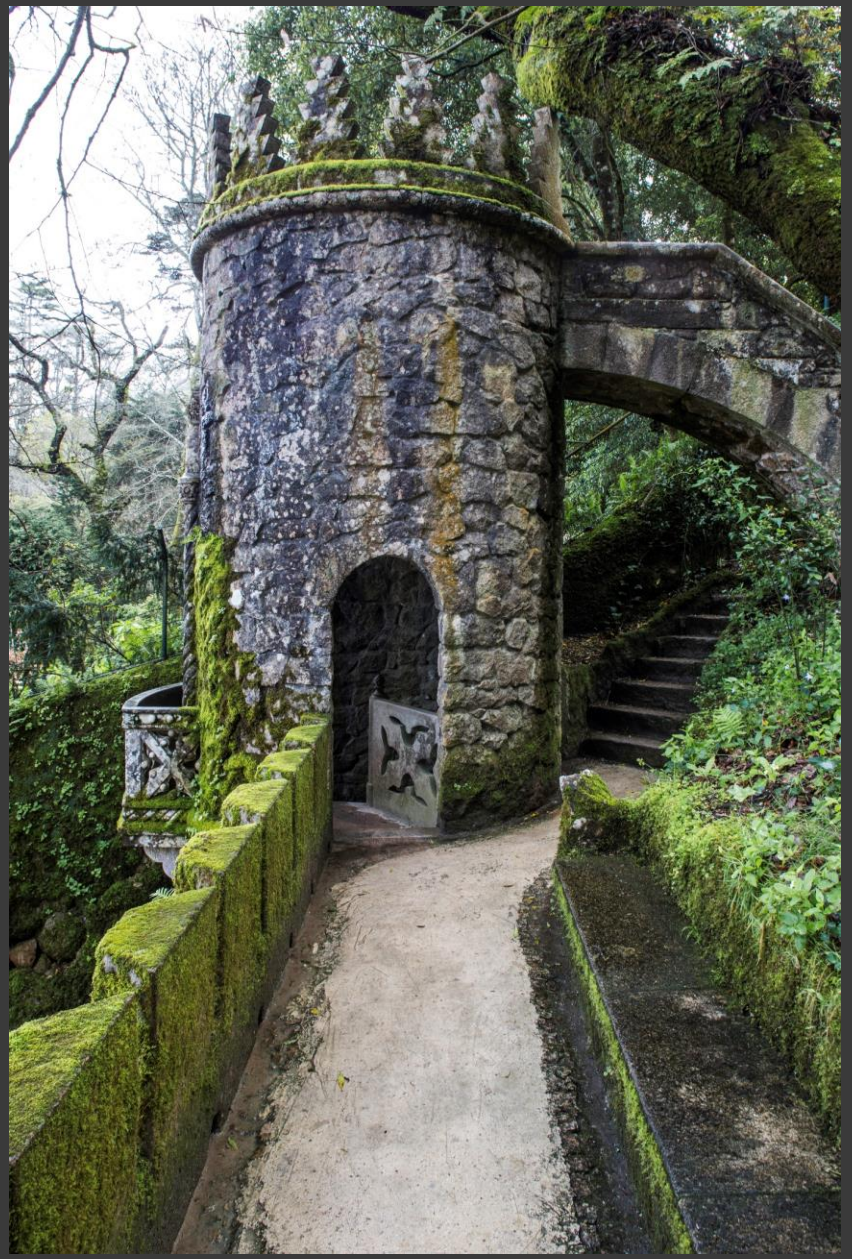
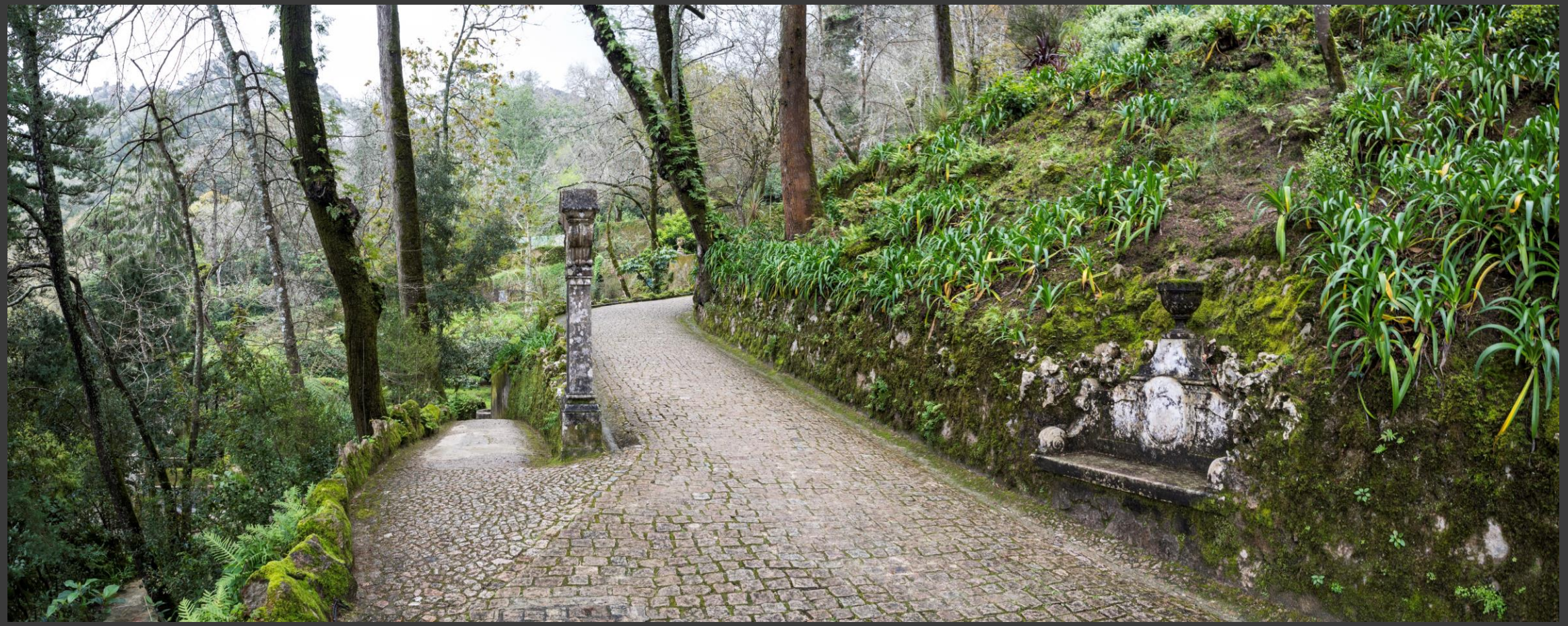
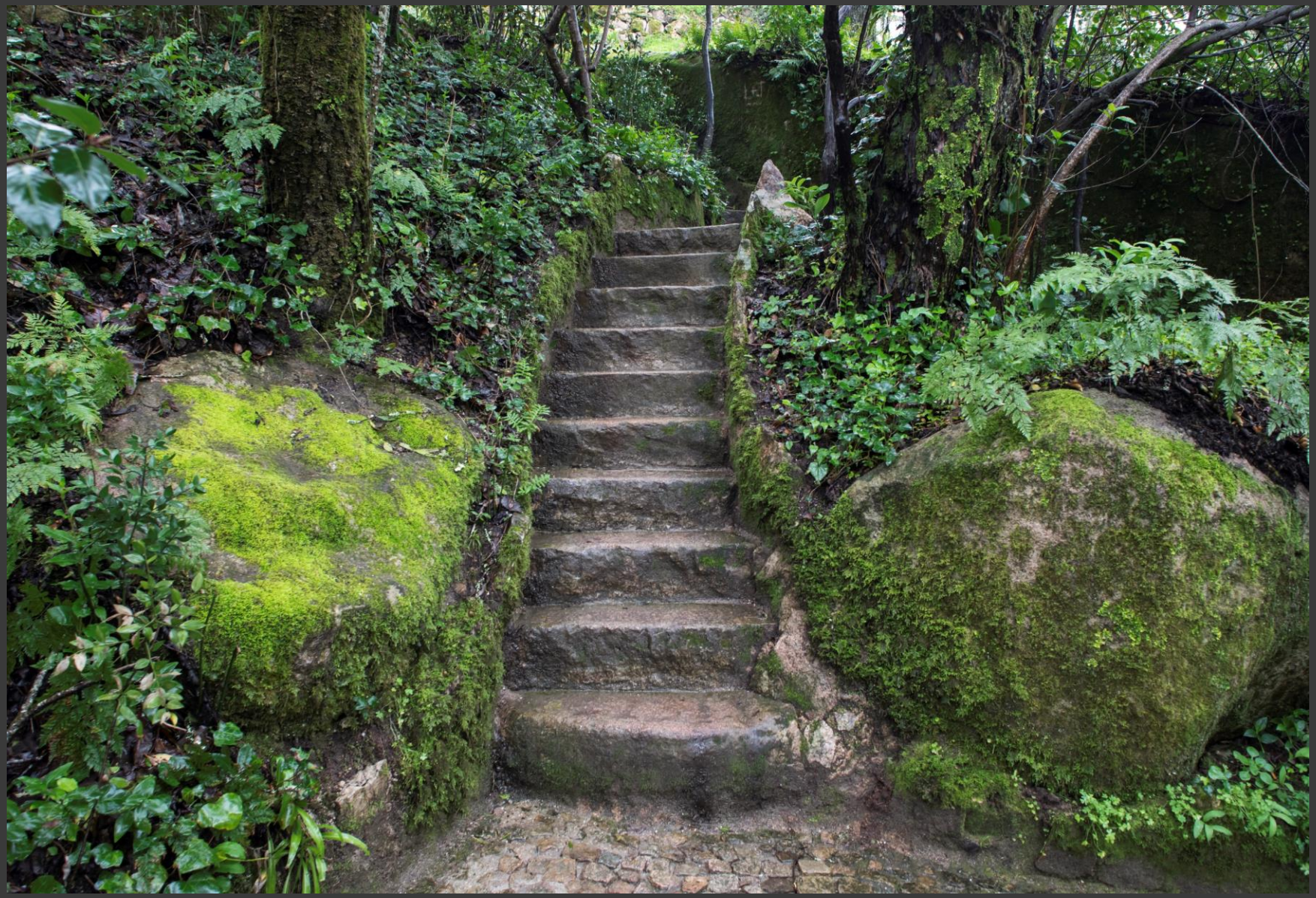
36. Tunnel at bottom of well to the *Lago da Cascata*
37. *Lago da Cascata* (lake and waterfall)
38. Bridge over water at *Lago da Cascata*
39. View from path of *Lago da Cascata*
40. Entry/exit gate at stables and coach house











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* For more complete biographies of both António Augusto de Carvalho Monteiro and Luigi Pietro Manini see *Quinta da Regaleira* by António Silvestre, Matilde Almas and Mónica Luís.

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