



STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION

What distinguishes rabelo boats from other types of vessels is a construction technique known as “clinker building”, believed to have its roots in Nordic technology.

Long oar used as a rudder in rabelo boats and rabões.

Author: Socrenaval (Vila Nova de Gaia)



- 01.** The outline of the sagro (the name given to the flat bottom of the boat), is drawn on planks laid out on the sand. These were divided into four equal parts, marked with three lines.
- 02.** Next, the oucas were fitted. These pieces reinforce the inside of the prow and stern and extend the profile of the boat.
- 03.** The hull is then built up, starting with the biqueiras at the bow. Planks were then added in an overlapping configuration, alternating between one side and the other, a boatbuilding technique known as clinker building.
- 04.** Once the final plank of the hull (the faísca) is in place, the cavernas, wooden cross-pieces that reinforce the hull widthways, are inserted. The base of the boat is divided into sections, with each pair of cavernas supporting a Port cask lying on its side. The length of the boat therefore depended on the number of casks.
- 05.** The addition of cavernas gave the boat its final shape. These pieces were usually made of oak and took advantage of the natural curvature of the trees' limbs.
- 06.** With the cavernas in place, the edges of the hull were reinforced externally, using pieces called curvatões at the bow and verdugos at the stern, then braced internally by dragas.
- 07.** A small roof called the coqueiro, located in the boat's stern, is used for storage when sailing. At night, an awning was slung between this and the raised platform, creating a sleeping area.
- 08.** The boat is then tipped on its side, using a team of oxen, and held in place with stakes.
- 09.** Next, the boat's exterior is finished: the hull is trimmed and secured with more nails, then caulked with flax fibre and finally coated with pez louro, a mixture of resin and a little mutton fat.
- 10.** Next, the boat is turned over again and taken to the water.
- 11.** Once in the water, the boat was fitted with the apêgadas (a raised platform from which the captain would steer using a long oar called the espadela), the sail and other equipment.



Auger

Wood, iron

A hand tool traditionally used to bore holes in wood before wooden pegs were inserted, joining the various pieces.

Adze

Wood, steel

The adze (from the Latin *asciola*) is a tool traditionally used by carpenters and coopers to shape wood.

3-legged pot

Cast iron

Pot used for cooking aboard the rabelo boat. Pots of this type were also used for preparing pez louro applied to the boat as a finish.