



# URWAN in CASCAIS, Portugal

## Discover How Cascais is Redefining Urban Nature Management: Insights from the URWAN Team's Visit

This factsheet unveils the key takeaways from the URWAN team's visit to Cascais, where they engaged with representatives from Cascais Ambiente and the Municipality of Cascais. Dive into some of the innovative strategies and integrated vision that make this remarkable city a benchmark for urban nature management and sustainable planning.





## → URWAN FOCUS

URWAN is dedicated to advancing urban planning by identifying and promoting best practices for the integration of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into cities. Through visits to exemplary urban areas, URWAN seeks to uncover both the challenges and opportunities of NbS implementation, offering valuable insights to inspire and guide others. This initiative, complemented by the URWAN NbS catalogue, aims to create a shared understanding of the latest advancements for NbS in urban settings, strengthening URWAN's mission to empower cities in adopting sustainable, adaptive, and innovative solutions.

“ *Cascais aims to become an increasingly green territory, integrating nature-based solutions into areas that were once highly urbanized. Years of dedicated work have strengthened our resilience to extreme climate events while simultaneously enhancing biodiversity in towns, villages, and neighborhoods—an essential factor in improving quality of life.* ”

### LUÍS ALMEIDA CAPÃO

Municipal Director of Environment and Sustainability



*Vegetable Urban Gardens for citizens*



*Sintra-Cascais Natural Park*



## → CITY PROFILE & CLIMATE CHALLENGES

Cascais, a picturesque coastal town in Portugal, is celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and vibrant community. Nestled just west of Lisbon, it is home to over 200,000 residents and a beloved destination for locals and tourists alike. Beyond its renowned beaches and historical sides, Cascais stands out as a leader in sustainability and the city's integrated approach to urban nature management.

Despite its many strengths, Cascais faces pressing climate challenges that demand proactive solutions. These include preventing forest fires, and restoring landscapes damaged by wildfires, and managing stormwater more effectively. With the growing impacts of climate change, the town is increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather events, putting its natural environment and community well-being at risk.

## → CITY SOLUTIONS

Cascais is making remarkable progress in addressing climate challenges through a comprehensive and innovative application of NbS.

The municipality has placed forest fire prevention and landscape restoration at the core of its climate resilience strategy. Recognising the increasing threat of wildfires, Cascais has implemented proactive measures, including strategic firebreaks and vegetation management, to reduce fire risks. A standout initiative involves using grazing animals, such as sheep and goats, in parks and green spaces to naturally control vegetation, further mitigating wildfire risks while preserving biodiversity.

In parallel, Cascais is upgrading its stormwater management systems to better adapt to extreme weather events driven by climate change. By incorporating green infrastructure, such as permeable surfaces and rain gardens, the municipality aims to reduce flood risks, enhance water retention, and improve water quality. These actions demonstrate Cascais's commitment to leveraging NbS to address immediate environmental challenges while ensuring long-term sustainability and community well-being.

Community involvement is central to the success of these initiatives. Cascais actively encourages residents to participate in planning and decision-making processes, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility. Through participatory frameworks, citizens co-create solutions and municipality has established 36 urban vegetable gardens, which not only enhance local food production but also strengthen community bonds, with a long waiting list of eager participants.



*Sintra-Cascais Natural Park*





To sustain and expand these efforts, Cascais is also investing in internal capacity building. The municipality is training its staff in NbS management and facilitating knowledge exchange among stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures the effective implementation of projects, enhances their impact, and bolsters the city's resilience to climate change. Cascais serves as a model for integrating NbS into urban planning, balancing ecological preservation with the needs of its community.

## → LESSONS LEARNED

Cascais showcases how a unified vision can transform urban nature management into a holistic and future-oriented strategy. By integrating green infrastructure with active citizen participation and innovative financing models, the city strengthens its resilience to climate change while enhancing community well-being.

Key lessons from Cascais's implementation of NbS highlight the critical importance of community engagement, cross-departmental collaboration, and adaptive governance. Actively involving citizens in planning and decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that solutions are tailored to local needs and priorities.

Interdisciplinary collaboration within municipal departments has proven essential for aligning objectives, avoiding duplication, and maximising resources. The establishment of a Climate Change Council has been instrumental in fostering communication and coordination, enabling a cohesive and strategic approach to sustainability.

Moreover, continuous staff training and capacity building have been fundamental to maintaining momentum and adapting NbS strategies over time. Cascais demonstrates that successful implementation of NbS is built on active participation, strong governance frameworks, and a commitment to learning and innovation. These lessons serve as an inspiration for cities worldwide striving to integrate NbS into urban planning.

