



Treasure of the Templars

Spend two days searching for the “Treasure of the Templars”, hidden in the heart of Portugal.

Dedicate the first day to Tomar. Begin your journey in the Church of Santa Maria do Olival, one of Portugal’s earliest Gothic churches, commissioned in the 12th century by the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, D. Gualdim Pais, as the pantheon for the Order. In the Church of São João Baptista you can see symbols that recount the legend of foundation of the city. Nearby, visit the immaculately-conserved 15th century synagogue. The Chapel of São Gregório embodies the perfect form of the Host, in glorification of the Eucharist. Before ascending to the castle, relax in Mouchão Park divided by the river Nabão. The park has a waterwheel that once served as an essential device for the local economy and is now one of the most frequently photographed sights.

The castle - founded in 1160 by the Knights Templar - was the most modern and advanced military fortress in the kingdom, inspired by fortifications built during the Crusades in the Holy Land. Within the Convent of Christ, admire the “Charola”, a round church of the Templars - the largest and best-preserved of its kind in Europe, perhaps inspired by the image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the mythic memory of Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple, the order’s mythic founding site. After being extinguished in 1312 by Pope Clement V, the Templars were succeeded in Portugal by the Order of Christ - that continued the crusading spirit during the epic era of the discoveries. The exotic sights visited by the caravels provided the inspiration for many of the Manueline decorative motifs, whose apogee is the Convent’s richly ornamented window. Walking through the Convent - that combines Romanic, Gothic and Mannerist styles - is like flicking through an art history book.

On the way down from the Convent, visit the simple Renaissance chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição. In the Wood of Sete Montes look for the “Charolinha” - a miniature round church hidden within the leafy vegetation. Further ahead, observe the spectacular, 7 km long Aqueduct of Pegões, an important 17th-century public work. You’re bound to be tired but you’ll also dream about the fantastic locations that you’ve visited.

On the second day you’ll need a car. Follow the road to the dam in Castelo de Bode and if there’s time, take a cruise along the reservoir to appreciate the landscape. In Atalaia, visit the exquisite Renaissance parish church. Continue to Vila Nova da Barquinha, where you can take a short boat ride to the Castle of Almourol, that seems to rise up miraculously from the middle of the River Tagus. This unreal setting conjures up legends of giants and mythic tales. Continue to Golegã - a land of horses and horsemen that contains the Quinta da Cardiga estate, which once pertained to the Knights Templar, but is now privately owned. Further north in Ferreira do Zêzere, you can see the ruins of the Tower of D. Gaião in Pereiro and visit the town of Areias, in the old Templar lands.

Conclude the route with another precious element of this “Treasure” – the Tower of Dornes. A rare example of military architecture, built by the Knights Templar in order to defend the zone, it blends harmoniously with the pretty village overlooking the banks of the reservoir in Castelo de Bode. Another breathtaking image you can take home with you.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Igreja de Santa Maria do Olival - Tomar
- Igreja de São João Baptista, Matriz de Tomar
- Museu Luso-Hebraico de Abraham Zacuto - Sinagoga
- Capela de São Gregório
- Roda do Nabão
- Convento de Cristo e Castelo Templário
- Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Conceição
- Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes
- Aqueduto dos Pegões Altos
- Barragem do Castelo de Bode
- Castelo de Almourol
- Torre de Dornes



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Igreja de Santa Maria do Olival - Tomar

Estrada de Marmelais de Baixo
TOMAR

Igreja de São João Baptista, Matriz de Tomar

Praça da República
TOMAR

Museu Luso-Hebraico de Abraham Zacuto - Sinagoga

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Capela de São Gregório

Largo de São Gregório, Estrada do Prado
TOMAR

Roda do Nabão

Parque do Mouchão
TOMAR

Convento de Cristo e Castelo Templário

2300 Tomar
Tel. : +351 249 313 481
Fax : +351 249 322 730
Website : www.conventocristo.pt
E-mail : convento.cristo@igespar.pt

Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Conceição

Largo de Nossa Senhora da Conceição
2300 Tomar

Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes

Avenida Dr. Cândido Madureira - TOMAR

Aqueduto dos Pegões Altos

TOMAR

Castelo de Almourol

Ilhota do Rio Tejo
Praia do Ribatejo - Vila Nova da Barquinha
Tel. : +351 249 720 358
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Torre de Dornes

Dornes
(FERREIRA DO ZÊZERE)



Suggestions

In the heart of Portugal

Tomar and the Discoveries

Declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1983, Tomar has seen the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, and the maritime expansion of Portuguese territory.

A town that reflects various periods of western art and history, Tomar began when D. Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first king, donated the lands around the town to the Order of the Temple as a reward for their help in recapturing the territory from the Moors. It is said that Gualdim Pais, the Master of the Order in Portugal, knew that it lay at the north / south divide of what was to become Portugal. It was also the site of the right angle that linked Earth to the sign of the Templars in the sky: the constellation Gemini.

It was in 1160 that the Master began to build the castle and ordered the region to be settled. The castle is connected to the Templars' Rotunda, an octagonal church and a gem of sacred architecture that was itself based on the temple erected by Constantine over the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Despite the suppression of the Order of the Temple in 1314 by Philip the Fair, King of France, the Templars were able to continue their mission in Portugal through the efforts of the King D. Dinis. With the approval of the Holy See, he founded the Militia of the Knights of Christ in 1319, which took over the property and privileges of the extinct order. The curved lines of the Templar cross were changed to straight ones. With their cross engraved on the sails of the caravels, the Knights of Christ joined Prince Henry the Navigator in preparing the Portuguese nation for the maritime discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries, carrying the Cross of Christ to all corners of the world.

King D. Manuel then symbolically expanded the Templar monument westwards, and it is here that the architectural heritage of the age of the navigators reaches its focal point. An example of this is the famous chapterhouse window, an eloquent work celebrating the Discoveries which rises towards the heavens under the Cross of Christ. It is as if the Portuguese mission to discover the world had found its highest meaning here, and the Knights had finally discovered their Grail.

Discover Tomar

The Cristo Convent is one of the greatest works in the history of Portuguese art and has received World Heritage status. It was originally the seat of the Knights Templar, which in Portugal was later transformed into the Ordem de Cristo. Infante D. Henrique, adviser on the Portuguese Discoveries, was governor of the Ordem de Cristo. And the Convent was rebuilt by King D. Manuel I, who gave it all its architectural grandeur.

Near the Convent, visit the romantic Mata dos Sete Montes. It's ideal for a relaxed walk, as is Mouchão Park. The gardens of this park, cool and picturesque, are located in the centre of town, near the banks of the River Nabão.

However, there is much else to see, not least the Gothic churches of Santa Maria do Olival and São João Baptista.

Not far from town is an equally beautiful place – the Castelo de Bode reservoir, where you can take a tranquil cruise with lunch on board or, if you're feeling more active, you can opt for a variety of water sports.

The Tagus Valley

Marshlands dominate the landscape, where bulls and horses go to pasture. The Tagus Valley has proud traditions of bullfighting, dancing and popular music – such as the fandango – in the brightly coloured costumes of the campinos.



Aficionados should make sure that they visit the bullrings, the stud farms and the fairs and festivals that take place in these lovely riverside lands. Lively bullfights can be seen at the Feira do Cavalo (Horse Fair) in Golegã and at the Feira Nacional de Agricultura (National Agricultural Fair) in Santarém. In Vila Franca de Xira, visit the ganadarias, where fighting bulls are raised, and the Centro Equestre da Lezíria Grande (Lezíria Grande Equestrian Centre), with its famous Lusitanian horses.

The whole region is rich in architectural and artistic heritage illustrated by the region's monuments, churches and museums. Don't miss the Almourol Castle, situated on a tiny island in the middle of the river, and nearby areas like Constância and Abrantes, whose castle perched above the town has a view that fades into the horizon.

The region is perfect for walks, horse rides and boat trips on the rivers and reservoirs. It is also a haven for those who like sport fishing, canoeing and other water sports.

It's worth stopping at the estates and wineries that are located on the Ribatejo Wine Route. And top it all off with some of the area's delicious cuisine.

Horseriding in the Ribatejo

On the fertile soils of the Ribatejo, home to the wild bull, rural people still wear traditional dress, and the men of the region still capture these dangerous wild beasts with their bare hands.

This is also the natural habitat for the Lusitanian thoroughbred horse, a noble and proud species that combines intelligence with an ability to be tamed. There is no better way to see this rural society than on horseback. This is an excellent way to spend your holiday if you're looking for some open-air adventure in a wonderful climate and beautiful natural surroundings.

Alternatively, visit a 'garraizada' or bullock fight, and get involved if you dare! Or perhaps you fancy a Portuguese style bullfight, showing the surviving noble tradition of training horses for battle? The Companhia das Lezírias, the largest national agro-cattle breeding and forestry complex, is an excellent place to start your tour of the Ribatejo.

In addition to the attraction of the horses of the Braço de Prata Stud Farm, you can also have a meal at the restaurant. After lunch, take the children to the educational centre, where the youngest can learn how to make bread and get up close to rural life.

Make sure you also fit in visits to the Golegã and Alpiarça country fairs.

Castelo de Bode

Close to the towns of Tomar, Abrantes, Ferreira do Zêzere and Sardoal, the dam in the River Zêzere has created an artificial lake. The Castelo de Bode reservoir stretches over 60 kilometres amidst valleys, mountains and pine forests.

The reservoir provides excellent conditions for water sports enthusiasts, and for those who simply enjoy the peace and quiet of nature. In the middle of the lake, you'll find an island – Ilha do Lombo - with a comfortable country inn where you can enjoy a relaxing stay.

Besides the various hotel facilities, there is also a boat that serves onboard meals - the São Cristóvão. The vessel offers peaceful river trips with magnificent views of the region.



Useful contacts

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