

# Aveiro

## ABOUT



The capital of the Ria, a vast lagoon where the freshwater of the River Vouga joins with the sea, Aveiro is intersected by canals, genuine streets of water, along which can be seen gliding the brightly coloured boats known as *barcos moliceiros*. Originally founded in the time of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Aveiro is now one of the most interesting cities on the Portuguese coast.

Due to the large numbers of web-footed birds that once inhabited this lagoon area, the city's first name was *Aviarium*.

D. João I (r. 1383-1433) gave Aveiro to his son, Prince Pedro, who ordered the city's first walls to be built, although these have since disappeared. Later, D. João II (r. 1481-1495), gave the city to his sister, Princess Joana, a lay sister at the *Convento de Jesus*, which now houses the *Museu de Aveiro*.

In the 16th century, the development of the salt industry, agriculture and fishing and the first cod-fishing expeditions to the distant Newfoundland in 1501 brought Aveiro a period of great prosperity, which led to its being awarded a charter by D. Manuel I in 1515.

However, in the winter of 1575, heavy storms destroyed the deep channel that had once linked the Ria to the sea, this was where the great ocean-going vessels would dock in Aveiro thereby destroying the maritime trade, fishing and salting businesses.

*Barra Nova* was built in the 19th century. Being opened to the ocean in 1808, it gave rise to the formation of a wide channel measuring roughly 264 metres across and about 4 to 6 metres deep. This channel opened the Ria to the sea and restored the source of the region's life and its very survival.

The Ria is linked to Aveiro via three canals: the *Canal das Pirâmides* (marked at its entrance by two stone pyramids), which extends into the *Canal Central*, the *Canal de São Roque*, which marks the limits of the city to the north-west and separates it from the salt-pans; and the *Canal dos Santos Mártires* (or the *Canal do Paraíso*) which leads to the south-west.

Using the *Canal Central* as the city's main axis, we suggest two tours of Aveiro:

- On the Left Bank, begin by admiring the graceful Art Nouveau buildings, which are beautifully reflected in the canal, stroll through the *Mercado do Peixe* (Fish Market), wander around the *Beira Mar* district and along the canal banks and savour the gentle sea breeze.
- On the Right Bank, visit the city museum housed in the *Convento de Jesus*. Monuments and churches, as well as the hustle and bustle of city life taking place under the diffuse light of the Ria, all add to the charm of this coastal city.

Evidently, all visitors will also want to discover more about the Ria de Aveiro. The two suggested itineraries will

introduce you to the labyrinth of canals, the white sand dunes by the sea and the vast expanses of salt-marshes with their pyramids of white salt.

If you enjoy nature trekking, the Reserva Natural das Dunas de São Jacinto is truly irresistible.