

Campo Maior

ABOUT



Like so many other towns in the Alentejo, Campo Maior is a quiet and peaceful town in the south of Portugal, situated very close to the Spanish border. Tradition has it that its origin can be explained by the wilful determination of three peasant families who decided to join together to found a settlement where they would be able to afford each other mutual protection.

The town's name comes from the Roman period (when it was known as Campus Maior), although the later period of Muslim occupation is clearly visible in the whitewashed houses, with their borders and their window and door frames painted in either blue or ochre. Originally, the town belonged to the diocese of Badajoz and it was only much later, when the Peace Treaty of Alcanizes was signed between Spain and Portugal in 1297 that the town finally became Portuguese territory. Even after this, it continued to maintain a very close relationship with the neighbouring Spanish town of Badajoz.

The town's population are famous for their determined character. At that particular point in the year when everybody's wishes coincide, one of the most interesting popular festivals in the whole of Portugal is held here - the Festa das Flores (Flower Festival), also known as the Festa do Povo (Festival of the People). This is a time when the residents of each street join together to decorate their neighbourhood with paper flowers arranged in joyful and brightly-coloured compositions (normally this festival is held in the first week in September). Thousands of people come to see the town decorated in huge masses of coloured paper.

One of the most interesting historical features in Campo Maior is the Ossuary Chapel, built in 1766 and one of the only three chapels of its kind in Portugal.