
Alcobaça

ABOUT



Alcobaça lies in the valleys of the Rivers Alcoa and Baça, which according to some authors is the origin of its name. It has also been suggested that it was the Arabic name of the place which was split to name the two rivers.

Alcobaça owes its fame and development to the Monastery or Royal Abbey of Santa Maria, founded by the Order of Cistercians in 1153. Building began in 1178 on land donated by Dom Afonso Henriques, the first King of Portugal, to Friar Bernardo of Claraval, founder of the Order of Cistercians, in fulfilment of a vow made after the Christian reconquest of Santarém, held by the Moors until 1147.

The Monastery owned a vast area of land, also known as "sanctuaries" of Alcobaça, where the Cistercian Order put order into the settlement by organising villages and estates. It also boosted agriculture by introducing new techniques and agricultural products that turned out to be lasting characteristics of this region, which is still today one of Portugal's main fruit producers.

With its building modelled on the Abbey of Claraval, the headquarters of the Cistercian Order in France, the Monastery of Alcobaça is a very fine monument and is classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

The cuisine and confectionery have been strongly influenced by the local Cistercian monasteries and convents, with the nuns' Monastery of Cos and the Capuchin Convent in Évora de Alcobaça along with the Alcobaça Monastery itself. The most famous sweet is "Pão de Ló" cake, which took its name from the place where it is made - Alfeizerão.

It is important to mention the excellent quality crystal, and the earthenware and porcelain.