
Marvão

ABOUT



Between Castelo de Vide and Portalegre, and only a few kilometres from Spain, stands the peaceful town of Marvão, on the highest crest of the Serra de São Mamede.

The hilltop village of Ammaia, as it was then known, owes its current name to the fact that it was used as a place of refuge by Ibn Marúan, a Moorish warrior, during the 9th century. The Arab domination of the area lasted for several centuries and ended when the military campaign of 1160/66 for the Reconquest of the territory resulted in yet another victory for the Christian forces led by D. Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal.

Geographically, Marvão is a point of natural strategic defence, marked by steep slopes to the north, south and west. Access on foot is only possible from the east, which was the direction in which the town gradually spread.

This fact did not go unnoticed by both conquerors and kings, who always took care to strengthen both the castle and its walls. It played a fundamental role in major military conflicts, including the fight between the king D. Dinis and his brother D. Afonso (1299), the Dynastic Crisis of 1383-85, the Wars for the Restoration of Independence (1640-68), the War of Spanish Succession (1704-12) and the Peninsular Wars (1807-11). Marvão's importance was recognised when it was raised to the status of a town by D. Sancho II, in 1266. The charter was renewed in 1299, and a New Charter was granted by D. Manuel, in 1512, who left his mark on the town with the building of the Pillory and the placing of the royal coat of arms on the Town Hall.

Inside the walls are narrow streets lined with the beautiful popular houses that are typical of the Alentejo. Amidst them, it is easy to find Gothic arches, Manueline windows, wrought-iron balconies and other embellishments in the nooks and crannies of the buildings made from the local granite.

Besides the castle and the walls that no visitors to the town will ever forget, Marvão's architectural heritage includes the Igreja de Santa Maria, a church that has been transformed into the Municipal Museum, the Igreja de Santiago, the Renaissance Capela do Espírito Santo and the Convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela, lying outside the walls.

One of the main reasons for visiting Marvão is the beautiful view over the surrounding region. To best appreciate it, we recommend the views from the top of the castle's high keep (Torre de Menagem) and from the Pousada de Santa Maria, luxurious hotel accommodation that has been formed through the adaptation of two of the town's houses and also offers you a place to rest and savour the delicious regional cuisine.

The Chestnut Festival, which is held in November, is an excellent occasion for visiting the town and getting to know more about its people and the local customs.