
Monsanto

ABOUT



In their geography, climate and fauna, the plains of the Beira Interior region, between the foothills of the Serra da Gardunha and the River Ponsul, form the transitional zone between the north and south of Portugal. Standing above them on a high crag is the historical village of Monsanto.

It is said that, from this bulwark, the village was able to withstand the siege imposed by the Romans in the 2nd century BC for as long as seven years. This extraordinary feat is commemorated by the villagers in their Festa das Cruzes (Festival of the Crosses), every year on 3 May.

The village offers visitors some of the most interesting human landscapes in Portugal. It spreads along the hillside, making use of the granite boulders to form the walls of the houses. In some cases, a single block of stone forms the roof, which is why the houses are popularly said to have "only one tile".

A stroll through the village's steep and narrow streets is enlivened by a number of emblazoned palaces, Manueline doorways, and the house where the doctor and writer Fernando Namora lived and practised. It was in fact here that he found the inspiration for his novel "Retalhos da Vida de um Médico" (Fragments of a Doctor's Life). One of the most notable buildings amidst all the houses is the 14th-century Torre de Lucano (Lucan's Tower), crowned by a silver cock, the trophy awarded to Monsanto in a competition organised in 1938 to find the most quintessentially Portuguese village in Portugal, in recognition of the authenticity of its culture.

The steep climb up to the castle is rewarded by one of the most breathtaking views in the whole region.