

Tomar

ABOUT



The development of Tomar is closely linked to the Order of the Templars, which received these lands in 1159 as a reward for the assistance they gave Dom Afonso Henriques (the First King of Portugal) in the Christian reconquest of the territory.

It was Dom Gualdim Pais, the first Grand Master of the Order in Portugal, who founded the castle and the remarkable Convent of Christ inside. Enlarged and altered over the centuries, this retains the influences of various architectural styles; it is the centrepiece of the city and classified as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Tomar, known as the city of the Templars, reveals other traces of their influence, particularly the Sete Montes Park, where traditionally rites of initiation are said to have taken place, and the Church of Santa Maria do Olival, founded by the Templars in the 12th century and containing the tombs of various Masters of the Order.

The Order of the Templars was suppressed in France in the early 14th century, but in Portugal it was transformed into the Order of Christ on the initiative of King Dom Dinis. This was subsequently approved by the Pope, and it was decided that the immense wealth they possessed should pass to the Order of Christ, which came to play an important part in the historic Portuguese Discoveries.

The Jews, after being expelled from Spain, founded a colony here in the narrow streets of the historical centre, in which one of the oldest synagogues in Portugal is conserved, complemented by the Abraão Zacuto Luso-Hebrew Museum.

The spectacular Festas dos Tabuleiros (a procession of white-clad "virgins" carrying headdresses made of bread loaves) are held every four years in July. Their origin is associated with the cult of the Holy Spirit.

About 14 kms from Tomar lies the lagoon of the Castelo de Bode dam, which captures the water to supply Lisbon, and whose islets and banks are covered with pine groves. There are ideal places here to spend some holiday time in contact with Nature.