

Faro

ABOUT



It was during the Roman period that this region developed and gained standing. It was then known as Civitas Ossobonensis, with its borders stretching to where modern Tavira lies, and included a number of towns with specific productive, rural and maritime functions.

This historical past come from interpreting archaeological finds made in the city which can now be seen in the Infante D. Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator) Archaeological Museum, and the Milreu Ruins to be found in the suburbs of Faro.

In the 9th century, the town was renamed Saint Mary Ibn Harun after the Arab family that governed the region. The name, would result in Faro. Throughout the period of Muslim rule, Christian religious practices were allowed, hence "Saint Mary" remained as part of the name. In addition to archaeological remains from that period, the Arab Gateway (part of the Arco da Vila (Town Arch)) recalls one of the entries into the walled centre, known as Vila-Adentro (Inner Town).

Vila-Adentro would be definitively returned to Christian rule in 1249, during the reign of Afonso III. The Sé Cathedral would be built on the site of the former Mosque and the walls, reinforced to highlight new rulers had taken over.

In the 16th century, Faro became an important trading centre on the Algarve, a role it kept up throughout centuries. It became a city in 1540 and the Bishopdom formerly located in Silves was relocated to Faro. Many of the city's religious monuments date from that period reflecting the economic wealth in the artistic grace of the Church of Misericórdia (Compassion) and the convents of Saint Francis, Nossa Senhora da Assunção (Our Lady of the Assumption - now the Infante D. Henrique Archaeological Museum), of Santiago Maior and of Saint Anthony of Capuchin.

In the 19th century, Faro was administratively reorganised, centralising regional powers and, along with its role in the regional economy, became one of the most important cities in the Algarve. The nobility and bourgeois contributed to this urban renovation building palace-like residences. the wealthier families built second homes on the outskirts. These include the impressive Palace of Estói.

In addition to the architectural heritage already described, a wander around Faro must also include a family visit to the Museum of Living Science, with its interesting range of activities especially for the younger visitors.

On the outskirts of the city, the sheer beauty of the Ria Formosa Natural Park ensures it is well worth a visit.