

Universidade de Coimbra

ABOUT



Photo: Arquivo TdP

A centre of learning, par excellence, the University of Coimbra was founded in 1290 and is one of the oldest in Europe, and was classified World heritage site by UNESCO; this classification includes also the Uptown and Sofia Street.

Founded in 1290 by Dom Dinis, with the name of "Estudos Gerais" (General Studies), the University was transferred between Lisbon and Coimbra during the reigns of several monarchs until it was definitively established in this city in 1537, by Dom João III. Since then, it has continued to occupy the same building, the former mediaeval royal palace, acquired by the university in 1597 from Filipe II of Spain, who also ruled over Portugal at that time.

The subjects studied here were theology, medicine and law until the 18th century when the Marquês de Pombal changed the educational system and introduced other subjects. Today, the University has seven faculties - Arts, Law, Medicine, Science and Technology, Pharmacy, Economics and Psychology and Educational Sciences.

Standing in a most privileged position overlooking the rest of the city, with a magnificent view over the River Mondego, the University is a complex building, constructed around a central courtyard in which a number of features stand out because of their artistic interest and symbolism. The entrance to the University is through the Porta Férrea (Iron Gate), an impressive Mannerist work (1634), where one can see the statues of the University's patrons, the kings Dom Dinis and Dom João III.

On the right, in the centre, is the Via Latina, a Mannerist colonnade built in the 18th century and indicating that Latin was the "official language" formerly used inside this space. The entrance through the loggia leads to the Sala Grande dos Actos (the Ceremonial Hall), and in the corner is the famous Tower. Built in 1728, it can be seen from all around the city and has become its most distinctive landmark. It has four bells, which used to regulate the routine of academic life and that of the city itself. The tower has always been tenderly referred to by the students as "a Cabra" (the Goat). On the western side are the Sala dos Exames Privados (Private Examination Hall), the Capela de São Miguel (St. Michael's Chapel), the Museu de Arte Sacra (Museum of Sacred Art) and the extremely valuable library, the Biblioteca Joanina. On the left of the Porta Férrea is the Colégio de São Pedro (St. Peter's College). Finally, in the course of your tour, you should also get to know some of the traditions that the students of Coimbra have successfully preserved over the centuries.

Contacts

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Timetable

1 October - 4 April: 9.30am-12.30pm / 2pm-5h30pm; 5 April - 30 September: 9am -7.30pm; Closed 25 December and 1 January.

Accessibility