

## Castelo de Guimarães

### ABOUT



Photo: Direcção Regional de Cultura do Norte

The castle's presence evokes the exciting mixture of legend, poetry and heroism that surrounds the beginning of Portuguese history. On this Monte Largo (Broad Hill) - referred to as *alpis latitus* in the Latin documents of the time - the nucleus of the future nation of Portugal was first developed.

In circa 968, Mumadona, the countess of Galicia, ordered a castle to be built on this site, where the population could seek refuge from the constant attacks unleashed upon them by the hordes of Vikings, who arrived by sea from the north of Europe, and the Muslims, who made raids from the territories that they occupied to the south.

On taking over the governorship of the province known as Portucalense from his father-in-law, Alfonso VI of León, Count Henry ordered another larger and more solid construction to be built. This represented the beginning of the important defensive structure that we can now see today, dominated by the square keep that stands between the four towers guarding each of the four corners of the walls.

Although this is not strictly documented, it is very likely that the building that stands against the inner part of the northern wall was the residence of Count Henry and the birthplace of his son Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal.

The castle is closely linked to the military history of the kingdom's foundation through the various battles that Afonso Henriques waged against his cousin Alfonso VII, king of León, in 1127, to free himself from the vassalage that he owed him. It is also linked to the great spirit of abnegation shown by his tutor, Egas Moniz, who offered himself as surety for the prince's oath when the latter, realising that he could not defeat the siege laid to him by Alfonso VII, made a promise of vassalage, upon which he later reneged when emerging victorious from these battles.

Until the end of the 14th century, many heroic battles were fought at Guimarães Castle to defend the integrity of the newly-formed kingdom of Portugal, its independence threatened by a series of dynastic disputes with Castile. With the appearance of the new forms of artillery, the castle of Guimarães, like so many others at that time, witnessed the beginning of the end of its days of glory. Abandoned to the ravages of time and the neglect of men, it was carefully restored to its original grandeur and beauty in the first half of the 20th century.

### Contacts

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### **Characteristics and Services**

Shops

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### **Timetable**

9.30am - 6.15 pm Closed: 1 January, Easter sunday, 1 May and 25 December

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