

Arco e Torre de Almedina

ABOUT

The Arco de Almedina was part of the solid mediaeval wall rebuilt in the 11th century by the Arab conqueror Almansor, and it is the only surviving gate from the three that once led into the citadel. It now marks the entrance into the old part of Coimbra, where a sculpture can be seen from the workshop of Jean de Rouen.

It is surmounted by a tower that has had various functions. In the 14th and 15th centuries, this was the seat of municipal power, the Casa da Câmara, and later the Casa de Audiência, where council meetings were held.

At the top is the bell that used to announce the council meetings, as well as the times when the gates would be opened and closed to the local population, a procedure that was continued until 1870. This was also once the site of a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Conception, where mass would be celebrated before meetings.

In 1835, when a new space was found for the Town Hall, several other institutions occupied the space inside the tower, until finally, in 1988, it was used to house the Municipal Historical Archives, which is still the case today. The picturesque Rua de Quebra-Costas (literally the Back-breaking Street) leads from the Arco de Almedina to the square where the Sé Velha stands. It should be said that this curious name was the humorous way that the people of Coimbra found to describe this steep, tortuous hill with slippery cobbles that have already caused so many falls.

Contacts

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