
Castelo de Marvão

ABOUT

Marvão Castle stands at a height of 843 metres above sea level, on one of the highest points in the Serra de São Mamede, known as the Serra do Sapoio. The crag on which it stands is a fairly rugged escarpment, forming a natural point of defence, to which access can only be gained from the east, the direction in which the village has spread inside the walls. From here it was possible to watch over the nearby frontier with Spain and observe the Spanish town of Valencia de Alcántara, from where enemy forces were frequently expected to come.

The castle and its walls form a very well preserved whole, resulting in a superimposition of fortresses, corresponding to various well-documented periods of construction. Still remaining from the time of the Christian conquest led by D. Afonso II (12th century) are a few sections of wall, the Romanesque doorway of the keep (Torre de Menagem), the Gates of Treason (Portas da Traição) and the small cistern. At the end of the 13th century, D. Dinis ordered work to be carried out on improving and strengthening the fortifications, which can be identified in the pointed-arch gates and the town wall. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the various entrances were reinforced and the keep was altered to its present-day structure, whilst the large cistern was also built.

The other fortified gates, the Porta de Rodão, Porta da Vila, Porta do Fortim and Porta da Rua Nova were built later, in the 17th century, as part of a campaign to reinforce defences during the Wars for the Restoration of Independence fought between Portugal and Spain (1640-68). At the end of the century, some of the directions in which the watchtowers faced were changed and the entrances to the castle were altered. It was at this time that the kiln known as the Forno do Assento and the citadel's workshops were built, although these have since disappeared.

Besides these military peculiarities, Marvão Castle is particularly appreciated for its surrounding countryside, with views stretching far into the distance. It is worth walking around the walls of Marvão and ending at the castle keep, from where, according to the popular saying, "the backs of the birds can be seen" as they fly around.

Contacts

Marvão
