
Mosteiro da Batalha

ABOUT



Photo: António Sá

Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória (or Monastery of Batalha)

One of the most fascinating places in the Iberian Peninsula.

A decisive event for the consolidation of the Portuguese nation took place on August 14, 1385, near the spot where the Monastery of Batalha stands: D. João, Master of Avis and the future king of Portugal, overcame the Castilian armies in the battle of Aljubarrota. This victory put an end to a dynastic crisis that had dragged on since 1383, since the death of King Ferdinand, whose only daughter was married to the King of Castile, an aspirant to the throne of Portugal.

D. João dedicated the monastery to the Virgin Mary, who he had invoked to intercede his triumph and donated it to the Dominican Order, to which his confessor belonged. This gave way to the birth of a work whose construction would last for almost two centuries and which resulted in one of the most fascinating Gothic monuments of the Iberian Peninsula. The construction of the monastery also embodied the consecration of King João I as king of Portugal, thus assuming itself as a symbol of the new dynasty and legitimised by divine will.

Its architectural value and historical significance spurred the classification of the monument as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

The construction included seven reigns of the second dynasty (1385-1580) and involved a large team of master masons of a high level, both national and foreign, that were initially directed by Afonso Domingues, until his death, in 1402. During this period, part of the church and the royal cloister were erected. He was succeeded by Master Huguet, an Englishman, who by 1438 completed the church, built the chapel of the founder and began work on the pantheon of D. Duarte. Between 1448 and 1477, Fernão de Évora designed the cloister of D. Afonso V and, in the 16th century, Mateus Fernandes was responsible for the Unfinished Chapels.

The monastery houses the most important nucleus of Portuguese medieval stained glass windows, which can be admired in the Chapel and the Chapter Hall. The central nave of the church stands at 32.5 metres and rests on eight columns on either side. In addition to the chapels and the cloisters, the monastery's dormitory, dining room and kitchen can also be visited.

The square outside was once largely occupied by the Cloister of D. João III. Burned down during the Napoleonic Wars, it was demolished during renovation works undertaken in the mid-nineteenth century. In the middle of the square you will see a tombstone that replicates the acronyms of several masons and marks the site of the old Santa Maria-a-

Velha Church, the original temple where the monastery's builders attended the liturgical services.

Contacts

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Timetable

1 April / 15 October: 9am-6.30pm 16 October / 31 March: 9am-6pm

Accessibility