
The Cistercian Order in the Alto Minho

ABOUT



In the green and pleasant land of the Alto Minho, located nearby the great rivers that flow from East to West, in unforgettable settings, we can discover four important nuclei of Cistercian monasteries – in locations that, from the 11th century onwards, hosted religious communities devoted to the Benedictine Order and subsequently to the Cistercian order.

Around 7 km from the town of Melgaço - that overlooks a natural amphitheatre incorporating the River Minho - the Convent of Santa Maria de Fiães and the Church of Nossa Senhora da Orada, were built when Portugal was founded as a nation - symbolised in the castle that crowns Melgaço, commissioned by D. Afonso Henriques in 1170.

Further South, if we leave the charming town of Ponte da Barca towards the impressive mountains of the Serra do Soajo, we encounter an enchanting setting next to a curve in the River Lima – where the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ermelo was built.

Returning to Ponte da Barca and travelling down the national road, EN 101 towards Vila Verde, we cross the River Cávado and follow in the direction towards Amares where we encounter the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria do Bouro. The austere monastic cells have disappeared as has the principles of posterity and austerity, and frugal diet. The site now houses one of Portugal's most beautiful Pousadas.

In order to complement our trip to Cistercian sites in the Alto Minho, we travel to Santa Maria das Júnias - a magical setting in the heart of the Serra do Gerês. To reach the site, we journey down the road towards Vieira do Minho, cross the dam in Venda Nova and follow the mountain road to Covelães. The landscape is illuminated during our trip by the blue waters of a succession of weirs and dams.

Other information

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