
Parque do Fontelo - Viseu

ABOUT

A walk through this spacious leisure area in which the natural and historical heritage comes together can be an invigorating alternative to days spent in Viseu. Here you will find swimming pools, a campsite, tennis courts and football pitches, a gymnasium and a jogging circuit inside a green area enriched by many kinds of ancient trees, where the environment has been so carefully preserved that it was awarded the Prémio Quercus 1993 - Iniciativa Autárquica ("Quercus Prize 1993 - Local Authority initiative"). The history of this fine space dates from 1149 when the Bishop of Viseu, D. Odório, bought the Herdade de Fontelo (Fontelo Estate). Bishop João Homem began the construction of the palace in 1399, and this was continued by other prelates who succeeded him. Fontelo achieved its greatest splendour in the 16th century on the initiative of Bishop D. Miguel da Silva, a powerful church dignitary who coveted the papal tiara, and an enormously wealthy man with a taste for the Renaissance, when it became one of the most exotic and opulent leisure estates in Portugal, much in fashion among the nobility and wealthy clergy in the 16th century. In the same century, Bishop D. Gonçalo commissioned the chapel of S. Jerónimo (1563) and two porticos (1565), in one of which D. Gonçalo's coat of arms can be seen. Nowadays, although reduced in size and splendour from how it must have been at the time of D. Miguel da Silva, the Parque do Fontelo is no longer for the exclusive pleasure of an elite but has become a wholesome area for leisure and sport accessible to all those who wish to enjoy it.