

HISTORICAL VILLAGES



CENTRAL PORTUGAL

The Historical Villages

The twelve Historical Villages are located in the mountains of Beira Interior in the centre of Portugal, in the districts of Coimbra, Guarda and Castelo Branco. They are all different from each other and charming in its own way. Full of centuries-old traditions, mysterious legends, castles and heroic fortifications, they seem to have been built by hand, stone by stone, with great care and good taste. To get to some of these villages, the roads are winding, have twists and turns, but they make this journey even more true and beautiful.



LINHARES DA BEIRA / TRANCOSO

Take a drive through the IP3 towards Linhares da Beira, a 13th century medieval village in the Serra da Estrela Natural Park. It has a unique architectonic and artistic diversity which makes it a real open-air museum. You must pay a visit to the Castle at 800 metres altitude, the Jewish House, the parish church and the pillory. Free time for lunch. We suggest the Cova da Loba restaurant in the square in front of the Castle entrance. Or if you have time, go back to Folgoso, where according to the legend the brave Lusitanian warrior Viriato was born, and have lunch at Albertino restaurant. Proceed to Trancoso, a bastion in the Christian reconquest and stage of the famous Battle of Trancoso, in which the Portuguese forces inflicted a heavy defeat on the Castilian forces, acting as a prelude to the Battle of Aljubarrota. Go across the wall through Porta D'El Rei and visit the historical centre, namely the pillory, the two churches and the Castle from the 8th to 9th centuries. King D. Dinis chose Trancoso for the wedding feast of his marriage to D. Isabel in 1282! And don't forget the enormous traces of Jewish presence in this land. Accommodation at Solar Sampaio e Melo.

MARIALVA / CASTELO RODRIGO

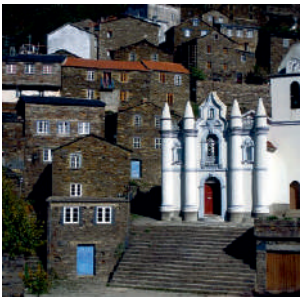
Breakfast and departure to the village of Marialva, a few minutes away from the city of Mêda. This was inhabited by the Aravos, the Lusitanians, conquered by the Romans and later by the Arabs, until the final victory of D. Fernando - the Great, in 1603. The Castle is a unique military oval shaped structure on top of a cliff. The village of Marialva has three distinct settlements: the "Cidadela", the "Vila" and the "Devesa" at the foot of the hill, each of them with a unique charm and you can have a different experience in each of them. Proceed to Castelo Rodrigo, which is full of romantic-gothic details, and looks like something out of period film set in the Middle Ages. It was once considered one of the 7 Wonders of Portugal. Go across the Porta do Sol and visit the castle, the towers and turrets, the pillory, the parish church and the ruins of the palace of Cristóvão de Moura. We suggest accommodation in the fantastic Casa da Cisterna, with stunning views over the valley and a different menu each day. At sunset, the owners of the house organise an unforgettable evening visit to the original rock engravings on the banks of the Côa!

ALMEIDA / CASTELO MENDO / BELMONTE

Proceed to Almeida, which in the past was one of the most important fortresses in the country with six bastions, which seen from above looks like a 12-pointed star. Almeida was the scene of epic battles, one of the most famous being the "Siege of Almeida" in 1810, during the III French Invasion. It belongs to the district of Guarda, with the river Côa as its neighbour and the border with Spain just 9km away. Pay a visit to the Fortress, the 15th century Manor, the Old Convent and the Museum of Military History and enjoy a panoramic view from 760m above the ruins of the fortress. Proceed your journey to Vilar Formoso for a visit to the Fronteira da Paz Museum in the square of the old train station. There you will find a memorial to the refugees of World War II and to the Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes. We suggest lunch at the Montecarlo restaurant. After the meal, departure to Castelo Mendo, in Serra da Gardunha, a village of predominantly medieval features, consisting of two walled main points, the Citadel and the Barbican. In the past, it was garrisoned by eight towers, which protected the citadel and the walled village. They were partially destroyed by the 1755 earthquake. And this day's journey ends in Belmonte, in Cova da Beira, the birthplace of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the Portuguese sailor who discovered Brazil. Belmonte, with its wide view of the eastern slope of the Serra da Estrela, was a place of refuge for Jews and its heritage includes a synagogue, a Jewish quarter and a Jewish museum. Don't forget a



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visit to the Castle and its Manueline window, the Museum of the Maritime Discoveries and the manor house of the powerful Cabrais family, where today you find the Municipal Library and Archive. We suggest accommodation at the Belmonte Sinai Hotel.

SORTELHA / MONSANTO

Departure from Belmonte to Sortelha, a village dating back to the Middle Ages, beautifully preserved and with a remarkable landscape setting. From the top of its towers and walls there are spectacular views. This village has four main gates. Which one will you go through? The Village Gate, the False Gate, the New Gate or the Castle Gate? Once inside, do not miss the Torre de Menagem, the Torre do Facho, the Torre Sineira, the Casa dos Falcões, the Manueline influences in the Largo Do Pelourinho and some of the windows of the houses. Then... just go up to Monsanto and be in "the most Portuguese village in Portugal". We suggest lunch at the Taverna Lusitana. Imagine a village high up on a steep hill, 758 meters high, in the middle of gigantic granite rocks. The horizon is flat, and the houses blend in with the boulders. There are traces of Arab and Visigothic presence. The great Portuguese writer Fernando Namora, who was also a doctor, lived here. The Misericórdia Church, São Salvador Church and the Clock Tower are really worth a visit. Accommodation at the Monsanto GeoHotel Escola.

CASTELO NOVO / COVILHÃ

Departure from the hotel in Monsanto towards Castelo Novo. After Castelo Rodrigo and Castelo Mendo, you will find Castelo Novo, on one of the slopes of Gardunha Mountain and in a natural amphitheatre landscape. It has an absolutely charming medieval style. It is a Historical Village which will fascinate you and make you fall in love with it and where you will find the peace you have been searching for so long. Pay a visit to the Castle and the Bell Tower, the Chafariz da Bica and the Solares dos Gamboas and D. Silvestre. Free time for lunch. We suggest the restaurant O Lagarto. The drive proceeds to Covilhã, a very special mountain town on the southern slope of the Serra da Estrela, the highest mountain range in mainland Portugal. Covilhã became famous for its cloth production and the wool industry, thanks to the influence and range of business contacts of the Jewish people who settled here. Take a walk through the city centre and admire the "Street Art" murals and have a coffee in the Town Hall square. And if you have a chance, take a walk across the pedestrian bridge over the Ribeira da Carpinteira which is 52 meters high.... We suggest staying at the Puralã Hotel or the Casa das Muralhas.

FOZ D'ÉGUA/ PIÓDÃO

Departing from Covilhã, the journey continues through winding roads across the mountains, through a majestic breathtaking landscape. Approximately 5 Kms before arriving in Piódão, be sure to visit Foz d'Égua, where the Piódão and Chãs d'Égua streams meet. Their course is interrupted by a small dam, creating a mesmerizing river pool. Bring your swimming costume for a dip in the crystal clear waters. It is a beautiful place, framed by two bridges, with two schist mills nearby. The stone blocks have been carved by the stream current, making this a truly paradisaical site. Continue the drive to the fantastic village of Piódão, set in a nativity scene around the steep slopes of the Serra do Açor, which form a unique setting of steps and slopes. Situated in a privileged location, the Parish Church - especially its interior - is the element that most stands out among the schist that is to be found everywhere in this village. The houses are distributed around the terraces, through winding, narrow lanes. It is indeed a unique sight in the world, the blue door and window frames of the houses, with their schist façades. Free time for lunch. We suggest Solar dos Pachecos. After lunch, you return home: north or south?



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#WETRAVELTOGETHER




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