



Monsaraz

History and culture

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Restaurants

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Due to its geographical location, the hill of Monsaraz has always played an important role in the history of the municipality, having been successively occupied by different peoples since prehistoric times.

In the 8th century, Monsaraz fell under the sway of Islam as a result of the Muslim invasions that occupied a large part of the Iberian Peninsula. Later, it became known as Saris or Sarish and formed part of the Kingdom of Badaioz, one of the largest and most important centres of Arab culture.

In 1167, it was conquered from the Muslims by Geraldo Sem Pavor in the course of an expedition that had first started in Évora, also newly-conquered. After the defeat of Afonso Henriques in Badajoz, Monsaraz once again fell into the hands of the Arabs. In 1232, supported by the Knights Templar, Sancho II reconquered the town on a definitive basis and later gave it to the Order of the Temple.

After the wars of 1383-1385, Monsaraz was integrated into the House of Bragança and became one of its most valuable sources of income.

In 1512, Manuel I granted a new charter to the town of Monsaraz, reformulating the legal and public life of the municipality. After the Restoration of Portuguese rule in 1640, the town received important tactical additions, such as the construction of a new ring of walls and bulwarks, turning it into a powerful "impregnable citadel" connected with the defensive system of Elvas, Juromenha, Olivença and Mourão.

Its status as a mediaeval walled town, the rapid growth of the villages in the Reguengos region, the great wealth of its handicraft and wine production and the loyal support given by the people of Monsaraz to Dom Miguel and his ideas (defeated during the civil war of 1828-1834) were all factors that led to the municipal seat being transferred from Monsaraz to Vila Nova de Reguengos. This transfer took place in 1838, but it was only established on a permanent basis in 1851.

The fortifications of Monsaraz and the town between the walls

This town came into being at a time of prosperity. Its population kept growing, however, and soon spread beyond its walls. The town's strategic position made it possible to detect the presence of the enemy well in advance of any attack, due to the visual communication established between the fortifications and the network of watchtowers built in the surrounding area.

Monsaraz's defensive system shows evidence of two distinct periods of construction and different building techniques:

- Mediaeval fortifications: the castle and town walls were built before the appearance of firearms (12-14th centuries). The walls are vertical and quite tall, being built of irregular-shaped schist stones, except for the corners and bases, which were built in regular blocks of granite;

- 17th-century fortifications: these essentially Vauban-style defences, have hypothetically been attributed to Nicolau de Langres and are surmounted to the north by an advanced construction. The progress made in terms of artillery forced military engineers to replace the high castle walls by less apparent and less vulnerable defences. The walls are made of schist and are much thicker. The necessary earthwork involved compacting the soil.



The Municipality at a glance



Set in the midst of the Alentejo's magnificent plains, and now also with the blue backdrop of the Great Alqueva Lake, the municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz forms part of the district of Évora.

It is bounded to the north by the municipalities of Redondo and Alandroal, to the east by Mourão, to the south by Moura and Portel and to the west by Évora and part of the municipality of Portel.

The municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz is located in a predominantly agricultural region, so that people's lives are closely linked to farming activities mainly the extensive production of grain crops, olives and wine.

The region's climate is typically Mediterranean with hot dry summers and mild wet winters, which inevitably marks its vegetation, fauna and landscape, as well as its people.

There are several megalithic monuments dotted all around the municipality, especially in the parish of Monsaraz, some of which are quite noteworthy at the European level.

Besides these megalithic monuments, you can also visit the mediaeval town of Monsaraz, where you can travel back in time.

The municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz offers exceptional conditions for enjoying outdoor activities in close contact with nature, such as boat rides, hiking, horseriding, fishing and hunting.

Besides its rich historical heritage and its magnificent well-preserved landscapes, the municipality enjoys a strong identity, marked by its traditional regional customs, handicraft, gastronomy and fine wines.

When talking about handicraft, mention must inevitably be made of São Pedro do Corval, the largest pottery centre in Portugal.



The Great Lake

This is the biggest artificial lake in Europe, covering an area of 250 km², 83 km in length and with a shoreline of over 1100 km, of which 200 km are located in the municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz.

The lake covers 13% of the total area of the municipality, marking out its borders to the south, west and east.

The Great Lake is a reservoir supplying drinking water to over 200,000 people.

It also provides irrigation for over 100,000 hectares of farming land, including the Spanish Extremadura province, and has one of the most powerful hydroelectric power plants in Portugal.

The Great Lake can be used for various water sports, and there are unforgettable boat trips available, allowing you to discover hundreds of tiny islands and all the hidden corners of this breathtakingly beautiful and immense lake.

The municipality covers an area of roughly 474 km², and has a population of 11,400 people living in five parishes:

Parishes

Campinho

Aglomerados

Campinho

S. Marcos do Campo e Cumeada

Campo

S. Pedro do Corval, Carrapatelo e St.º António do Baldio

Corval

Monsaraz, Barrada, Ferragudo, Motrinos, Outeiro e Telheiro

Monsaraz

Reguengos de Monsaraz, Caridade, Gafanhoeiras e Perolivas

Reguengos de Monsaraz

The municipality has mooring quays at Monsaraz and Campinho, equipped with facilities for water sports. Visitors can also take boat trips from here to explore the Great Lake.

There are several picnic areas equipped with tables and benches and shaded by large trees, as well as a viewing point from where you can admire the region's unique landscape.

History and culture

- ① Menhir of Belhoa
- ② Dolmens 1 and 2 at Olival da Pêga
- ③ Menhir of Outeiro
- ④ Cromlech of Xerez
- ⑤ Rocha dos Namorados
- ⑥ Ermida de Santa Catarina
- ⑦ Convento da Orada
- ⑧ Torre do Esporão

Sport and leisure

Wine tourism

- ⑨ Herdade do Esporão
- ⑩ Adega do Calisto
- ⑪ Adega José de Sousa
- ⑫ CARMIM
- ⑬ Granacer

