

Felgueiras

Mosteiro de Pombeiro



Praying and working since before Portugal existed

“Ora et labora” (pray and work), the Benedictine motto, helps us understand what we see when we spot the monastery of Santa Maria de Pombeiro in the distance. The maxim is a synthesis subsequent to the Rule of St. Benedict, born in the sixth century, where chapter 48 reads: “Idleness is the enemy of the soul; and therefore, the brethren ought to be employed in manual labor at certain times, at others, in devout reading”. This explains the choice of the location: low and fertile areas, with plenty of water, adequate both for contemplation and agricultural labor, are the unwritten norm that presided over the installation of Benedictine cenobies. This one was established there in the 11th century (the first known documentary reference to Pombeiro dates from 1099), although the earliest references to this community, formerly located elsewhere, can be found in the



↑ [Monastery of Pombeiro](#)



middle of the 9th century.

Of the first constructions, from the 11th century, there is little left. It was only after the monastery received a Charter of Immunity (*carta de couto*) in 1112, from countess Teresa of Portugal, mother of the first Portuguese king, and support from the Sousões of Ribavizela, a local aristocrat family to which we associate the genesis of the country, that the Romanesque project started. It was probably authored by Gonçalo de Sousa (the name appears in an inscription of 1199, outside the transept), largely hidden by later interventions, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. The clearest Romanesque element can be appreciated as soon as we arrive at the site and look carefully at the façade, where the two Mannerist bell towers impose their presence, thanks to the spires at the top (started in the 16th century). The portal, with its five archivolts based on chiselled capitels, was spared by the advance of the wall between the towers, which kept the original rosea (subsequent to the portal, already showing signs of passage to the Gothic – presumably from the beginning of





the 13th century) and created niches in which images of the Virgin, to whom the church was consecrated, and of Saint Benedict of Norcia and Saint Scholastica, patrons of the Benedictine order, were placed.

Along with the conditions of the land, the location was also justified by the proximity to the intersection of two of the main medieval roads in the region: one that connected Porto to Trás-os-Montes, passing through Amarante, and another that went from Beira to Guimarães and Braga (the Douro River was crossed from Porto de Rei, today in the municipality of Resende). This circumstance has contributed to the aggrandizement of the monastery, which housed passing monarchs and assisted pilgrims. Pombeiro became one of the most powerful institutions



On the façade, the Middle Ages are evident in the Romanesque portal and in the rosacea, already transitioning into the Gothic. The interior of the church is eminently Baroque.

of Entre Douro and Minho, and so it continued, having received many of the changes that dominate the current aspect in the Modern Era. In addition to the façade, that we have already mentioned, we must refer to the great modifications that the 18th century brought to the interior, far beyond all the golden Rococo carving, of significant impact: the main chapel (totally rebuilt around 1770), the high choir or the pipe organ. In the main altarpiece, we must highlight the image of St. Mary, the patron saint of the monastery, which, despite the many touches in later periods, remains Gothic, perhaps from the end of the 14th century (look at the nearly adult features of the Child, on the lap of the Mother, but as if he was sitting on a throne).

The construction of a renovated cloister began already in the 19th century (1816-1819), and the former disappeared; the new one highlights the neo-classical language. It is clearly unfinished because, in 1834, the extinction of religious orders led to the end of the institution. This explains the decay of the monument, to which several restoration campaigns have put an end.





Neoclassical wing of the cloister, which, with the extinction of religious orders (1834), was not completed.



The largest star in a Romanian constellation

A National Monument since June 1910, the monastery of Santa Maria de Pombeiro has been part of the Romanesque Route since 1998, and is therefore also part of Transromanica, the Great Cultural Itinerary of the Council of Europe. Born from the initiative of the Association of Municipalities of Vale do Sousa and then extended to other municipalities (there are 12 in total), the Romanesque Route brings together 58 monuments marked by the architectural style that prevailed between the 11th and the 14th centuries, in addition to two interpretation centers, in Lousada and Penafiel. In addition to fulfilling tourism promotion purposes, increasing visits to the heritage assets in question and improving the experience, through reliable and accessible information, this successful project of heritage management also relies on the involvement of local populations and their identification with the monuments, thus becoming a key factor in boosting the regional economy.

Monastery of Pombeiro

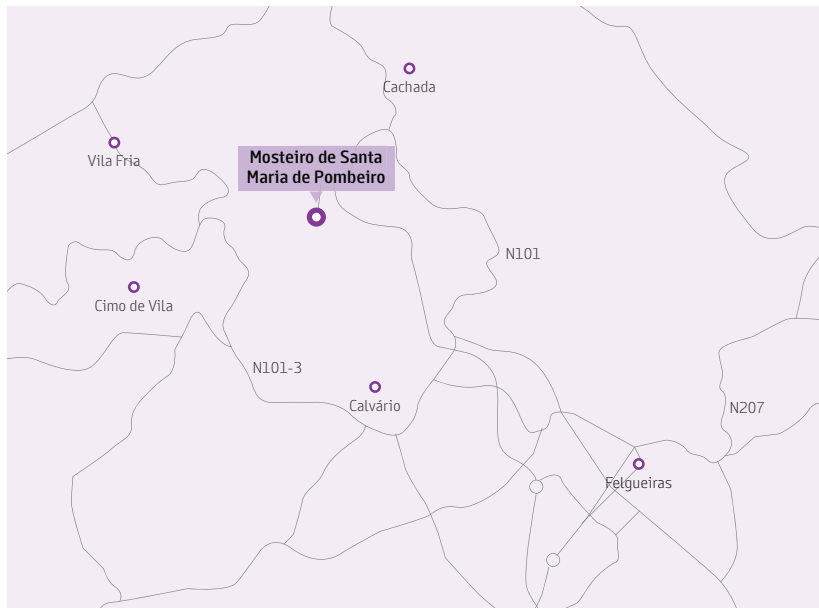






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