



## Day 11 | THE MONDEGO PLAINS

Mealhada ➤ Coimbra

The eleventh day of the Route **begins in Mealhada** at the Parish Church (Avenida Comendador Messias Baptista), and **ends in Coimbra** at the Church of Holy Cross (Praça 8 de Maio). This stage is 23 km long, and it can be completed in around 5hrs. It covers a varied terrain and the altitudes range from 5 to 143 metres. It has an **easy level of difficulty**, and makes its way through a diverse landscape of rural spaces and urban areas, which provide the ideal conditions for a **peaceful day's walking**.

Located in Central Portugal, this region links the districts of Aveiro and Coimbra, and its climate progressively leaves behind any coastal influence as it heads inland. You pass through the Municipalities of Mealhada and Coimbra, where you find historic towns and striking natural and urban landscapes. This is the region of the fertile **Mondego plains**, that spread out alongside this major river and its tributaries, which are the principal elements in this landscape.

The **cultural heritage** is impressive and attractive, characterised by the **antiquity and authenticity**, quantity and diversity of all its features. Simplicity and tradition are encountered alongside grandeur and erudition. Over the course of this day, you can visit monasteries, churches and chapels, as well as museums, gardens and parks, true works of art whose beauty never fails to cause an impression.

The **Route leaves from Mealhada's** Parish Church. Having left the city and made your way through its suburbs, you walk through wooded countryside, and for some time you follow a stream. You then make your way along small municipal roads that pass through villages with a few scattered houses and farmland.

In **Lendiosa**, you will see a **small chapel** with a large window above the portal, and a broken pediment and cross crowning its façade. Then, in **Mala** (a village in the Parish of Casal Comba), you will see, alongside the road, the **Chapel of Our Lady of the Candles** with its small churchyard. The church's façade has baroque



➔ 40°21'37" N 8°27'19" W

features, above all the pediment above the door, the window frames and the pinnacle of the side tower.

The Route then continues along a series of tracks. In the Parish of Barcouço, you will pass through **Sargento Mór** (village of Quinta Branca), where there is the small **Chapel of Our Lady of the Conception**. Make your way along Estrada do Lameirão, and then Rua Chãs and head into **Adões**.

Shortly afterwards, you will find yourselves in the **Municipality of Coimbra**. Head into **Trouxemil** along Rua de Nossa Senhora dos Aflitos. Then continue down Rua da Fonte Grande and Rua das Almas, alongside the **Merendas da Fonte Grande Park**. Continue along Rua do Alto das Maias and then Rua do Calço.

In **Cioga do Monte**, you will see the **New Chapel of Saint Anthony** (Rua de Santo António) and then the **Quinta de Santo António**, a historic manor house that encompasses the **Old Chapel of St. Anthony** (Rua da Rigueira).

Having left the village, make your way through a pleasant area alongside the river with a verdant and

well-irrigated landscape provided by the River Mondego ecosystem. In **Adémia**, you will pass by the **Chapel of St. John the Baptist** (Rua de S. João Batista), a small church with a stone cross built into its façade.

Cross the **River Velho** and follow the river bank along Rua Parcelar do Campo. You have now reached **Coimbra**, the city that was founded and grew up on the banks of the **River Mondego**. Then having made your way round the Train Station (Coimbra B), continue along the edge of the **Choupal National Forest**, where the River Velho flows into the River Mondego.

Head for the city centre along Avenida Fernão de Magalhães, and then take Rua Simões de Castro, Rua do Carmo, and Rua da Sofia. When you get to the Council Chambers you will see Praça 8 de Maio, and then the **Church of the Holy Cross**, where the day's walking ends.

➔ 40°12'21" N 8°25'56" W





➔ 40°12'39" N 8°25'43" W

The Church belongs to the **Monastery of the Holy Cross**, which was founded in the twelfth century for a community of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. The church's façade has a romanesque structure that corresponds to the era of its foundation, but it has a grandiose and refined manueline portal, which was built in the sixteenth century by the architect Diogo de Castilho and the sculptor Nicolas de Chantereine. Inside there are various manueline and renaissance elements. The whole monastic complex merits a visit including the sacristy, the cloisters and the chapter house.







The exceptional artistic value of this monument is matched by its historical significance. It is a historical site associated with key events and figures from the past. Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques, is buried in the main chapel, and Saint Anthony lived and studied here; having been born in Lisbon in 1195, and prior to his departure for Italy, where he would die in Padua in 1231.

In accordance with your interests and the time you have available, make sure you explore the city with its monuments, museums, parks and gardens. The **University of Coimbra** conserves a number of historic buildings, art collections and scientific heritage, and is classified as a **World Heritage site**. In what is one of Europe's oldest universities, don't miss the eighteenth-century **Library** and the **Science Museum**.



➔ 40°12'32" N 8°25'40" W

You can also visit the **Old Cathedral** (a twelfth-century Romanesque building), the **New Cathedral** (a seventeenth-century church built by the Jesuits) and the **Machado de Castro National Museum** (art and archaeology collections). Likewise, wander the historic **medieval streets** that wind their way up the hill and soak up the atmosphere of **academic life**, with its traditions and experiences. You will undoubtedly have many reasons to come back both as a pilgrim and a visitor.

➔ 40°12'31" N 8°25'37" W

