

Coimbra

Condeixa-a-Nova

Day

[12]*16km
± 4h00*

Day 12 | ALONG THE CARMELITE ROUTE

Coimbra ➤ Condeixa-a-Nova

In Coimbra, the **Northern Way joins the Carmelite Route**. This itinerary, designed by Castelos e Muralhas do Mondego and managed by the ACF-Caminhos de Fátima Association, is part of the network of Fátima Routes. It is inspired by the life and work of Sister Lucia, one of the three visionary children of Fatima, who in 1947 joined Carmelo de Santa Teresa in Coimbra and lived there until her death in 2005.

Therefore, the **twelfth day's walking begins in Coimbra**, at the Church of the Holy Cross (Praça 8 de Maio) and, a few metres further on, in the Praça da Portagem, it begins following the Carmelite Route. The day **ends in Condeixa-a-Nova**, at the Main Church (Praça do Município). This stage is 16 km long, and it can be completed in around 4hrs. There are barely any difficulties along the way and the maximum altitude is 180 metres. It has a **medium level of difficulty**, and offers ideal conditions for a **pleasant walk**.

It is located in Portugal's Central region in the **Baixo Mondego** region, which is a transitional zone between the coastal and inland regions. The Route runs through the parishes of the municipalities of Coimbra and Condeixa-a-Nova, an area of **ancient settlements**, where both the natural and human landscape is marked by an **abundance of water**, which irrigates **verdant fields** and **urban gardens**.

The **Cultural Heritage** conserves the memory of the past, yet is enriched by contemporary trends. Over the course of this day the pilgrim-walker will have unique moments for reflection, learning and delight, as the Route passes through urban centres with **historical monuments** (monasteries, churches, chapels, palaces), and also museums and art galleries.

Leaving from Praça 8 de Maio, in front of the **Church of the Holy Cross**, along side which is the historic **Café Santa Cruz** (one of Europe's oldest cafés), the Route follows Rua Visconde da Luz. Then having passed the **Church of St. James** (a romanesque building), continue along Rua Ferreira Borges, where you will see the **Municipal Museum**, housed in the historic Edifício Chiado (an early



twentieth-century example of ironwork architecture). This pedestrian route ends at the **Largo da Portagem** on the banks of the River Mondego. From here on the Route **links up with the Carmelite Route**, which it follows, always keeping to the **appropriate signposts** for the Fátima Routes.

Cross the River Mondego at the **Santa Clara Bridge**. As you make your way through this urban setting and alongside the river, you will pass by the **Portugal dos Pequenitos** theme park (opened in 1940, and created by Bissaya Barreto, a lecturer from the University of Coimbra, and Cassiano Branco, a modernist architect), as well as three historic Franciscan convents, which are important historic and artistic monuments: **the Convent of Saint Francis** (a seventeenth-century building converted into a cultural space), **the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha** (a fourteenth-century Gothic building that contains the tomb of Queen Saint Elizabeth), and the **Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova** (a seventeenth-century mannerist building). The Route skirts the beautiful **Gardens of Quinta das Lágrimas**, the site that is traditionally associated with the tragic romance of King Pedro I and Inês de Castro.

Continue along the **Ladeira do Vale do Inferno**, a wooded green space, with a **viewpoint** offering extensive panoramic views of the surrounding region. Continue along the winding roads. At the **Estrada Antiga de Lisboa**, you pass by the **Chapel of the Lord of the Afflicted**, a typical baroque chapel built on a hexagonal plan.

Continue, **always heading straight on**, along Rua La-deira da Paula, Estrada da Chapeleira, Estrada da Ponte and Rua Venda do Cego, where you will pass by a series of warehouses. Carry on along Rua da Mesura, passing the College of the Immaculate Conception, and continue along Rua do Cabo.

You will then get to **Cernache**, a town in the Municipality of Coimbra, which in the sixteenth century served as the municipality's administrative centre. In Rua da Igreja, just a few metres off the marked route, you will find the **Parish Church**: traces of the building's medieval past are noted in the chevet's features, while the façade is built in the classical style and has a renaissance portal, as well as a side tower.

At the end of Rua Álvaro Anes, you will pass the **Chapel of St. Laurence** and continue along Rua do Cubo and then Rua da Cruz. Having crossed the motorway via the bridge, take Rua da Escola, and then carry on along Rua de S. Tomé, Largo da Pela and Rua da Ribeira. Make your way along ever more tree-lined roads, whose names recall the customs of this historic rural region (Rua das Almoinhas e Rua de Baixo).



Now in **Condeixa-a-Nova**, make your way through the verdant, pleasant landscape following Rua da Capela, Rua da Calçada, Rua Monsenhor Manuel Paulo and Rua Francisco de Lemos until you arrive in the town centre. The town's history is related to its location amidst **fertile farming land** and the great **abundance of water**, as well as historic **communication routes**. In the twelfth century the Condeixa Estate belonged to Coimbra's Monastery of the Holy Cross. It gained importance in the sixteenth century when King Manuel I passed through the town on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and he granted a charter to the town in 1514. Much of the **Estrada Real**, which linked Lisbon to Coimbra, followed the historic **Way of Saint James**.

On entering the town centre there are various buildings of historic and artistic value, as well as pleasant **gardens**. In Praça da República, which marks the **end of this day's walking**, you will find the **Main Church** (dedicated to Saint Christina of Bolsena), a building with sixteenth-century roots that conserves a manue-line baptismal font and some mannerist retables by the Coimbra School. The Church was enlarged in the eighteenth century with a bell tower and baroque façade.

You can take advantage of the rest of the day to rest or calmly wander the streets of Condeixa, noting the **manor houses** that testify to the important role that the local bourgeoisie and aristocracy played in this town's history. Of particular note, for their size and artistry is the **Figueredos Palace** (Largo Artur Barreto / Praça do Município), an example of sixteenth and seventeenth-century mannerist architecture, and the **Sotto Mayor Palace** (Rua D. Francisco de Lemos) with its exuberant baroque façade.

Don't miss out on discovering other aspects of this town's **cultural heritage**, and in particular the **Fernando Namora House-Museum** (where this writer was born in 1919) and the **PO.RO.S / Portugal Romano em Sicó (Roman Portugal in Sicó)**, a museum and interpretation centre devoted to the history of the Roman era in the Terras de Sicó region; a visit to this museum will stand you in good stead for the predominant theme of the next day's walk.