

Rabaçal



Ansião

Day

[14]

19,5km
± 5h30



Day 14 | SETTLEMENTS OF THE SICÓ MOUNTAINS

Rabaçal ➔ Ansião

The fourteenth day of the Route **begins in the village of Rabaçal**, at the Main Church (Rua da Igreja), and **ends in the town of Ansião**, at the Parish Church (Rua Conselheiro António José da Silva). It is 19.5 km long and can be completed in around **5hrs 30 mins**. This part of the Route covers a diverse landscape, with altitudes of up to 300m, whereby it may be classified as a **difficult stage**. It is well suited to a **calm pace**, and makes its way through an area imbued with the deep relationship between nature and life. It is ideal for contemplation, in the true sense of spirituality.

The Route passes through the Municipalities of Penela and Ansião and along the extensive Rabaçal Valley. You will see villages that are typical of the **Sicó Mountains**, immersed in the **sublime karst landscape**. Here nature moulds its own history. The scenery is marked by the immensity of the natural spaces, from which emerge **small villages** with fields used for dryland **farming** and expanses of **pasture land** for the traditional herds of sheep and goats.

In this context, the **Natural Heritage** is shaped by the conditions and morphology of the landscape. There are traditional plantations of **vines and olive trees** in the flat valley zones, while the mountains are defined by their characteristic **rock formations**. The **Cultural Heritage** is noteworthy for the antiquity and value of the region's **archaeological sites and historic urban centres**, as well as various ethnographic features. Also of relevance is the **Immaterial Heritage**, associated with the region's **gastronomic culture**, and in particular the wine, confectionery and famous Rabaçal cheese, which is still made according to ancestral and traditional methods.

The Route leaves from Rabaçal and makes its way amidst fields and woods, and for parts of the way along tracks. You can see in the distance, perched high up, the **Castle of Germanelo**. It is located on the site of an ancient fort developed by the Romans, and it was Portugal's

first king, Afonso Henriques, who in 1139 ordered that it should be built to strengthen the Mondego line of defences during the Christian reconquista.

Soon after, in the **Municipality of Ansião**, you pass by **Ribeira de Alcamouque**, a small village with a traditional chapel with a porch built into its façade. The village's name is derived from an Arabic word meaning castle. From here on the route is always surrounded by nature and offers panoramic vistas across all the surrounding area.

Stop in **Alvorge**, a village on a small hill with traditional domestic architecture, which in the Middle Ages was a Vicariate of the University of Coimbra. A number of historical monuments demonstrate the antiquity of this village, such as the **Main Church**, dedicated to Our Lady of the Conception (a seventeenth-century building with a baroque, carved high altar), the **Misericórdia** building (with its side chapel), and a traditional stone **Cross**.

This village is **in the heart of the Sicó Mountains**, in a medium and low altitude area, where the plant life consists predominantly of Mediterranean species. Walking through this landscape, which is rich in **the colours and aromas of nature**, you find small settlements, nestling



upon the rolling hills and on the sheltered slopes, whose names are associated with ancestral rural tradition. On the outskirts of the villages or along the outlying roads there are **traditional chapels**, many of which have porches for pilgrims to rest in, offering both cool respite from the sun and shelter from rain and wind.

After **Junqueira**, you will come to **Casais da Granja** with its Chapel of St. Anthony. In **Netos**, you will pass by the Chapel of St. Joseph. Near **Areosa**, just a few metres off the Route, in Constantina, you can see the **Chapel of Our Lady of Peace**, a small, seventeenth-century Marian church, which is noteworthy for its large porch that forms part of the *façade*, as well as the interior decoration with its baroque carved altars and the ceiling paintings in the chancel.

As you draw closer to **Ansião**, and having passed the **Chapel of St. Peter**, cross the **River Nabão** over the historic **Cal Bridge** (built in the seventeenth century). **In 1669, Cosimo III de' Medici**, Grand Duke of Tuscany, travelled this way when he visited Portugal, as is recounted by his chronicler Lorenzo Magalotti in the official account of his journey, and in two drawings by the Florentine painter Pier Maria Baldi (one of **Ansião** and the other of **Fonte Coberta**), which are preserved in the Historical Archive of the Laurentian Library in Florence.

The day ends in the town centre at the **Main Church** of Our Lady of the Conception, a building with a simple *façade* and side tower, while inside there are three naves adorned with baroque decorative elements. Close by you can see the **Chapel of Mercy** with a magnificent baroque portal and a seventeenth-century **Pillory**. Take a moment to sample the local cuisine, which is famous for its traditional confectionery.