

Day

**[6]***25,1 km*  
*± 8h00*

➔ 39°30'6" N 8°41'50" W

## Day 6 | THROUGH THE AIRE AND CANDEEIROS MOUNTAIN RANGES

**Monsanto ➤ Sanctuary of Fátima**

On this last day of the Route, the distance between **Monsanto** and the **Sanctuary of Fátima** is around **25,1 km** and can be covered in approximately **8 hours**.

The track continues through the Aire and Candeeiros mountain ranges. Along the landscape of **deserted mountain ranges**, small valleys and hollows dedicated to agricultural production and small hillside villages emerge.

In this rural environment, traditional agriculture and herding mark the landscape, with traditional stone walls delimiting properties and protecting herds alongside the occasional artisanal stone shepherd shelters.

The shapes and configurations of the natural landscape dominate, especially the area's well-known caves and caverns, but also the unusual karst formations and the karst polje of Mira-Minde.

The approach to Fátima is marked by the contrast between the rural and the urban, the latter naturally associated with the construction of the Sanctuary. Resuming a historical tradition in Portugal, the city of **Fátima** is the only urban centre next to a place of worship and pilgrimage formed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We suggest that you take a few stops along this part of the walk, organising your day into small stretches to enjoy the landscape and enter into communion with nature and with the local communities you cross on your way to the pilgrimage destination.

The first leg of this fifth day, between **Monsanto** and **Minde**, covers 8 km over around 2 hours. Several breaks can be made at signposted picnic spots along this part of the track.

Cross and walk out of **Monsanto**. Go up to the road that connects this village to **Covão do Feto** and continue down gently until you reach the foothills of the **Aire**



➡ 39°30'7" N 8°41'48" W

**mountain** range. Here the landscape begins to change. Whether cut by the cold winter wind or bathed in hot summer sunlight, the wild but beautiful mountains should be visible, dominating a panorama that physically affects our senses.

Shortly after leaving **Monsanto**, in the village of **Casais da Moreta**, you can climb to the viewpoint and picnic area of the **Aire** and **Candeeiros Natural Park**. Small patches of Portuguese oak and holm oak appear in the landscape. The dozens of native plant species there include aromatic, medicinal and honey plants.

#### **AIRE AND CANDEEIROS MOUNTAINS NATURAL PARK – PNSAC**

l a protected area of 38.900 hectares in the Aire and Candeeiros Mountain ranges, part of the Extremadura limestone massif. A vast territory with natural areas and dispersed areas of urban settlement, it is constituted by four morphological sections: the Aire mountain range, the Candeeiros mountain range, the Santo António plateau and the São Mamede plateau.

Despite the surface dryness of the soil, rainwater penetrates the calcareous terrain, creating a large underground water reserve. There are numerous caves and caverns in the subsoil, and curious rock formations, such as karst formations, can be found on the surface.

Fauna includes bats, jennets, foxes, rabbits, Eurasian eagle-owls, Bonelli's eagles, owls, crows and ravens. Flora includes holm oaks, olive trees, oaks and rosemary, but also some floral species such as orchids and peonies.



➔ 39°31'33" N 8°40'46" W

Continue to **Covão do Feto**. At the highest point, cross the road that connects the **Serra de Santo António** to **Moitas-Venda** and, next to a small eucalyptus plantation, take the path that leads to the top of the mountain.

Alternatively, you can choose the easier route along the tarmac road to the village of **Serra de Santo António** and from here continue towards **Minde**. The town is located on the **Santo António Plateau**.

Here, the walls and buildings are made of limestone. The path is bordered by loose stone walls that delimit the small properties on which circular constructions house shepherds, animals and agricultural implements. Olive trees dominate the vegetation and grow protected by these rustic man-made constructions.

To the north, the mountain range again becomes covered with gorse, rosemary and oak trees. In the dor-



mant, shallow valleys between fenced plots, agriculture is practised using long-standing ancestral methods.

Keep climbing until you reach another viewpoint and picnic area. This site provides a wide panorama of the karst polje formed in the lowlands between **Minde** and **Mira de Aire**.

**THE KARST POLJE OF MIRA | MINDE** | a large lake that existed in this area in ancient times and which still forms when sufficient water accumulates in the extensive underground networks and rises to the surface.

4.000 meters long and 1.800 meters wide, it is the largest karst polje in the Limestone Massif. In winter, it fills with water, forming a large lake that reaches a depth of eight meters. In addition to the beauty of the landscape, it is an environment rich in biodiversity. When full in the winter season, we find the mallard duck, the common moorhen and the Eurasian coot. The drier summer brings other bird species such as the European stonechat, the Tawny pipit and the Short-toed snake eagle.

It was precisely this ancestral aquatic formation that enabled the increase of manufactures and the weaving industry that attracted the settlement and formation of the two villages that gave it its name.

After a rest, start the descent to **Minde**, a village that developed thanks to the weaving and wool industries, especially the manufacture of blankets. This intense commercial activity gave rise to a local dialect (mindrico or minderico), created by traders to maintain the privacy of their negotiations.

Here you can rest and regain your strength, but also observe the old houses and the **Igreja Paroquial de Nossa Senhora da Assunção** (Parish Church of Our Lady of the Assumption), with a pediment cut out on the façade and an interior with altars of gilded carved wood. In the picturesque square, where the traditional bandstand was erected in 1933 with an iron roof and tile

panels alluding to the textile industry, there is also the **Roque Gameiro Watercolour Museum**, installed in the house which belonged to the family of this remarkable painter, born in Minde in 1864.

Back on the track, you begin the second section of this last day between **Minde** and **Giesteira**.

**Covão do Coelho** has some support facilities and another picnic spot in the **Natural Park**. After a short stop here, cross the **Serra de Aire** mountain.

The Route continues through mixed urban and rural areas, villages and fields used for plantation and grazing. There are many different roads and dirt tracks, so we advise attention to signage and an up-to-date map. The track advances across slopes, summits and valleys, but also through plains. The latter is the sign that we have left the Natural Park, with the landscape beginning to change.



➡ 39°34'44" N 8°40'48" W

The **Rua das Partilhas** takes you to the village of **Gi-esteira**, where you can visit the **chapel of Santo Amaro**, built in 1633.

You have now arrived to the last section of the day's walk and of the pilgrimage Route itself. From here to the Sanctuary of Fátima is about 7 km, a distance that can be covered in around 1 hour and 30 minutes. This route goes towards **Casal Velho e Moita do Martinho**.

Between planted fields and forests of maritime pine and oak, continue along the **Estrada da Moita do Martinho**, which will take you to the **Cova da Iria** and, as such, **the Sanctuary of Fátima**, where the **Chapel of the Apparitions** is the final destination.

➡ 39°37'48" N 8°40'33" W





# The Sanctuary of Fátima



## PILGRIMAGE SITE AND ART SPACE

The walking paths and itineraries lead us to **Fátima** in a true spirit of pilgrimage. On arrival at the **Sanctuary**, we encounter an emblematic site where religion and art are intertwined.

The Sanctuary stands on the site of **Cova da Iria**, the location where the Virgin appeared to the three shepherd children in 1917. Around this remote territory populated by olive trees and holm oaks, the sanctuary was erected and the city of Fátima grew, a city whose history is inseparable from the apparitions and the construction of the sanctuary.

### HOLM OAK

Located in a limestone massif, Cova da Iria has a wetter climate than the surrounding arid mountain range. These characteristics have allowed Fátima to develop a magnificent natural ambience of trees and plants, a green lung in which the Holm Oaks stand out.

These highly resistant trees adapt to the characteristically rugged landscape of the São Mamede plateau, which is notable for its series of geological depressions. The characteristics of the soil and climate have contributed to the scientific importance of these ancient trees that shape the surrounding landscape, in which they are deeply rooted. With sturdy trunks and broad canopies that pass through a wide spectrum of colours throughout the year, these trees provide a source of endless aesthetic fascination to the region.

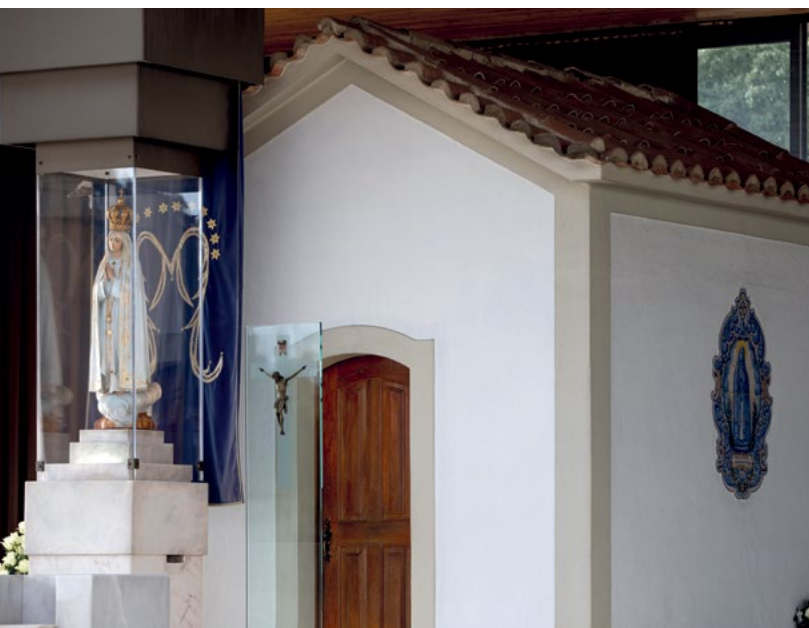
It was in this wild and beautiful natural environment that the Virgin appeared to the three young shepherds (Jacinta, Francisco and Lúcia) in one of the holm oaks, in 1917. Preserved from this antique landscape in the area around the sanctuary is a large holm oak, currently

located next to the small chapel erected on the site of the apparitions.

A meeting place for pilgrims and visitors and a place of faith, the sanctuary is also a space dedicated to artistic expression.

The **Sanctuary** consists of a series of monumental structures, including the **Chapel of the Apparitions** (built in 1919), the **Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary** and the **Church of the Holy Trinity**.

The **Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fátima** and the **Church of the Holy Trinity** reflect mutually distinct architectural and aesthetic orientations. Their spatial organisation facing each other across a large plaza creates an enormous space for prayer, where millions of pilgrims gather. Another setting dedicated to prayer and important religious ceremonies, the **Chapel of the Apparitions** stands in a location visible to all assembled pilgrims and is protected by a large covered gallery.



**THE CHAPEL OF THE APPARITIONS** is the central sacred and congregational space of the Sanctuary of Fátima.

Built in 1919 at the behest of the Virgin Mary in one of her apparitions to the three children, the first Mass was celebrated here in 1921. On 6 March of the following year, it was destroyed by a bomb and then immediately rebuilt. The chapel is a simple building, visually and architecturally designed for the congregation of the faithful and pilgrims around a space of prayer and to provide a visual focus on the site of the apparitions.

In the centre of the chapel, the Virgin of Fátima stands on the site of the holm oak of the apparitions, which was removed branch by branch by believers.

Since the 1980s, the architectural interventions have incorporated a porch structure which protects the chapel and all those who gather there for private and public ceremonies of prayer and faith.

Exquisite **art and architecture** combine to create an atmosphere of sophistication throughout the Sanctuary. Responding to the unique requirements of space, climate and materials, the various artworks serve in particular to reflect and enhance the site's prevailing spiritual ambience.

Designed by Gerardus Samuel van Krieken (1864-1933), the first stone of the **Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary** was laid on 13 May 1928. Its consecration took place on 7 October 1953. The façade of the Basilica is preceded by an imposing staircase that extends in a colonnade, designed by architect António Lino (1909-1961). In their structural form, the Basilica and colonnade merge together to form the ample prayer space, creating an amphitheatre open to the world and for the spiritual advancement and participation of the faithful.

The sculptural elements of the colonnade (executed from 1953 onwards) are the creative expressions of various sculptors, including Álvaro de Brée (1903-1962), António Duarte (1912-1998), Leopoldo de Almeida (1898-1975), Salvador Barata Foyo (1899-1990), Domingos Soares





Branco (1925-2013), Maria Amélia Carvalheira (1904-1998), Sousa Caldas (1894-1965), Vasco Pereira da Conceição (1914-1992), Irene Vilar (1930-2008), José Manuel Mouta Barradas (1960) and Vítor Godinho Marques (1964). The sculpture representing the **Immaculate Heart of Mary** was placed in the centre of the basilica's façade on 13 May 1958 and is a work by the sculptor and Dominican monk Thomas MacGlynn (1906-1977).

The works of art inside the temple are equally representative. The statue of São Domingos de Gusmão is the work of Maria Amélia Carvalheira (1904-1998). Those of St. António Maria Claret and St. John Eudes are the work of Martinho Felix de Brito, while the statue of St. Stephen of Hungary is by António Amaral Paiva. The representation of the shepherds is the work of two contemporary sculptors: José Rodrigues created the representation of St. Francisco Marto and Clara Menéres that of St. Jacinta Marto.



Works notable for their emotional spontaneity and for the coherence of their formal language, the 14 golden bronzes of the **Mysteries of the Rosary** are also the work of Martinho de Brito.

The works of high relief on the vault of the main chapel are by Maximiano Alves (1888-1954), while the stained-glass windows on the lateral altars were developed by João de Sousa Araújo (n. 1929) and present the litany of Our Lady. The 15 mosaic panels are the work of Fred Pittino (1906-1991).

Within the **Sanctuary's** enclosure stands the **Nativity scene**, originally presented in the exterior space in 1999 by the sculptor José Aurélio (1938). The piece is notable for its modern design, charged with symbolism and iconographic references. In the form of a 5-metre-high elongated triangle in stainless steel, it presents an angel with raised wings welcoming and heralding the birth of Jesus.





Inaugurated on 12 October 2007, the **Church of the Holy Trinity** opened a new dialogue of convergence and community, inviting meditation, prayer and communion. Designed by Greek architect Alexandros Tombazis (b. 1939), the church incorporates national and international artistic elements in a considered blending of art and architecture.

The artworks in the new temple were commissioned from a diverse range of renowned contemporary artists. Álvaro Siza-Vieira (b. 1933) painted the tiled panel dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul and located on the lower floor of the Church. Pedro Calapez (b. 1953)





created the main portico, while Francisco Providência (b. 1961) is responsible for the names of the Apostles to which the side doors of the temple are dedicated. The Canadian artist Joe Kelly designed the front wall of se-rigraphed glass in countless languages, while Slovenian artist Ivan Rupnik produced the gold leaf mosaic which adorns the wall of the Presbytery, the New Jerusalem of the *Apocalypse of St. John*. Irish artist Catherine Green conceived the great bronze crucifix suspended over the altar, while Italian artist Benedetto Pietroggrande carved the image of Our Lady in Carrara marble for the Presbytery. Outside, the Cross over the Sanctuary of Fátima was produced by German artist Robert Schad, while the monumental statue of Pope John Paul II is the work of Polish artist Czesław Dźwigaj.

