



Mudejar Art

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I.1 LISBON

- I.1.a City Museum
- I.1.b National Archaeology Museum
- I.1.c Cathedral
- I.1.d St. George's Castle
- I.1.e The Moorish Wall
- I.1.f Alfama Quarter

I.3 ALENQUER (option)

- I.3.a Islamic Alenquer

I.4 ÓBIDOS (option)

- I.4.a Historical town of Óbidos

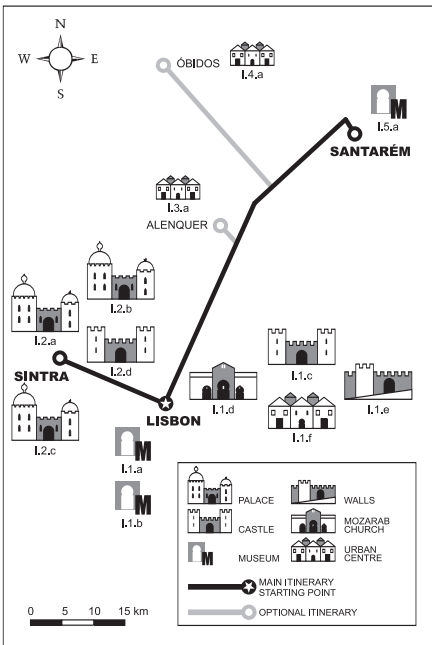
I.5 SANTARÉM

- I.5.a Santarém Municipal Museum - São João de Alporão

Fado

I.2 SINTRA

- I.2.a Vila Palace
- I.2.b Pena Palace
- I.2.c The Moorish Castle
- I.2.d Monserrate Palace and Gardens



*Pena Palace,
detail, Sintra.*

*The Moorish Castle,
Sintra.*



The vast estuary of the River Tagus formed an inland sea that was prolonged by a dense network of canals, navigable as far as Abrantes, Coruche or Tomar. Here was the origin of a settlement capable of allying the most advanced arts of fishing and the cultivation of the fertile mud flats of the Ribatejo to the most careful tending of orchards and vegetable gardens. For many centuries the various harbours in this inland-sea (popularly known as the *Mar da Palha* or Sea of Straw) were the westernmost points of the Mediterranean routes, making it possible to successfully blend together shipbuilding techniques with naval experience. Then, at the end of the period of

Islamic civilisation, sea routes were opened up across the Bay of Biscay and the northern seas.

The Christian Conquest of the mid-6th/12th century does not seem to have affected the riverside populations of fishermen and sailors, who, just like the local country folk (known as *saloios*), continued to leave the marks of their own particular civilisation upon this region. The reasons for this are undoubtedly related to the region's density of population. Lisbon and its surrounding areas benefited from the activities of the Moorish community until the end of the 15th century. Besides leaving its stamp on the region's place names and the people's careful ten-

dering of their vegetable patches and gardens, the Mudejar way of life influenced the architectural fashions of the palatine arts of the 16th century Manueline style and even the Romantic revivalism that was to follow on much later.

C. T.

I.1 LISBON

At the end of the 6th/12th century, Lisbon was clearly already the largest urban centre in Gharb al-Andalus. If we add the 15 hectares of space inside the city walls to the two residential quarters of Alfama and west Lisbon beyond the walls, its urban area amounted to approximately 30 hectares. Taking into account the dense settlement throughout the suburbs and along the riverbank, it is quite likely that there was a population of some 20-25,000 inhabitants concentrated in this area.

As was the case in other similar city-ports, two main centres can be clearly

identified around which the population grew. At the highest point of the hill there stood the citadel, a residential palace for an elite of courtiers; by the riverside, there was a profuse accumulation of fishermen, artisans and traders, who together formed the lower city. Their merging together into one large body was already confirmed by the end of the 4th-b. 5th/b. 11th century. The palace where the *alcaide* or governor resided was on the hilltop (the present-day residential quarter of Santa Cruz) together with other residences of the palace officers.

Leaving the *medina* by the western side, in the area close to the main mosque, one would have entered another urban labyrinth spreading sharply down the hillside to an inlet from the sea, which served as the city's harbour. On its sandy beaches, carpenters and caulkers could be seen building and repairing boats.

One of the Muslim cemeteries spread out eastwards, on the site where the Monastery of São Vicente was built after the Christian conquest, undoubtedly flank-

*St. George's Castle,
Lisbon.*



Lisbon

City Museum, Lisbon.



ing and overlapping with other ancient Palaeo-Christian burial grounds. Also in the eastern part of the city, but closer to the river, were the shops of the gold- and silversmiths and the silk and brocade merchants. These were the *qaysariyya*, where customs duties were also charged.

C. T.

I.1.a City Museum

Campo Grande, 245, tel: 21 757 17 25/6/7. Entrance fee. Open: 10.00-13.00 and 14.00-18.00. Closed on Mondays and public holidays.

The building which houses the City Museum is a remarkable mid-18th-century construction, which has been a listed building since 1936, although neither its commissioner nor architect are known. It is currently known as the Palácio Pimenta (the name of one of its former owners) and was purchased by the Lisbon City Council in 1962. Today, the museum houses a permanent exhibition about the city's history, organised into chronological and thematic groups.

Although the collection from the Islamic period is considered to be relatively unimportant, attention is drawn to a plaque showing the chronology of emirates (3rd/9th-4th/10th centuries) and two tombstones written in Arabic.

Plaque

Although for many years it was classified as Visigothic, it is now accepted that this plaque (found in Rua dos Bacalhoeiros) dates from a later period. The parallels that it reveals with near-eastern art, and in particular with features that have been identified in Khirbat al-Mafjar in Palestine, have led the art historian Manuel Real to review its date and to include it amongst the productions of a Lisbon workshop that was particularly active during this period.

Tombstone N.º 1

After the city's Reconquest, this tombstone belonged to Mouraria (the Moor-



kind in Portugal) and has the following words inscribed upon it: “In the name of God, the Clement, the Merciful. God blesses Muhammad and his family. This is the tomb of al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn [... died] on the first Monday of Shawwal in the year 800 of the Hegira. May God have compassion upon him”.

Tombstone, 800/1398, City Museum, Lisbon.

Tombstone, 6th/12th-7th/13th century, City Museum, Lisbon.

Tombstone N.º 2

Found in Rua das Madres (Madragoa Quarter), this tombstone bears certain similarities to the tombstone of Frielas belonging to the National Archaeology Museum. It must date from a fairly late period (6th/end of the 12th century or even from the 7th/13th century) and has the following Qur’anic inscription: “All that is found upon the Earth shall disappear. Only the face of thy Lord will remain adorned with majesty and nobility”.

S. M.



I.1.b National Archaeology Museum

Praça do Império, tel: 21 362 00 00. Entrance fee. Open: 10.00-18.00. Closed on Mondays and 1st January, Easter, 1st May and 25th December.

Since the end of the 19th century, the National Archaeology Museum has occupied part of the western wing of the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, a building that was classified as a National Monument in 1907. Until roughly 20 years ago, the museum exhibited a permanent collection of archaeological and ethnographic material, in which there was a place for

ish Quarter) and was found in Praça da Figueira in 1962, during excavation work for the Lisbon underground railway. It is a curious piece dating from the end of the 14th century (the most recent one of its

Lisbon

National Archaeology
Museum, Lisbon.



a small sample of the so-called “Portuguese-Arab” pieces. The permanent exhibition inaugurated in 1989 excluded this sector and the examples of the city’s Islamic past were sent to the museum’s reserve collection. The cycle of temporary exhibitions that began in 1994 culminated in the opening of the exhibition entitled “Islamic Portugal. The last signs of the Mediterranean” in 1998.

In João Saavedra Machado’s work about the history of the Museum (known at that time as the Dr. Leite de Vasconcelos Ethnological Museum) and published in 1964, the

Tombstone of Frielas,
c. 6th/12th–b.
7th/13th century,
National Archaeology
Museum, Lisbon.



only reference made to the museum’s Islamic treasures amount to the following text: “The Ethnological Museum has only a few objects from this period: sculptures (decorated capitals and column bases), decorated friezes, a font, tombstones with inscriptions, ceramics and bronze artefacts”.

Since then, a few objects from the Islamic period have been incorporated into a collection that was basically the one inherited from the time of Leite de Vasconcelos, the greatest Portuguese ethnologist of the first half of the 20th century. Although small, this collection includes pieces of undeniable quality, amongst which is the tombstone found at Frielas (Loures), the Cacela ablutions font and two capitals from the time of the *caliphs*.

Tombstone

The upper part of an epitaph does not have a date and bears no reference to the deceased person. It dates from the end of 6th/12th–7th/13th century. The arch that frames the inscription continued to be commonly used in the Lisbon region, as can be seen from the tombstones at the City Museum.

The inscription on the stone reads: “God is eternal. Have compassion according to thy mercy, oh Thou who ruleth over all, and look [with mercy] upon the place whither I am sent [...]”.

Ablutions Font

This font can be dated to the second half of 6th/12th century and belonged to the collection of the archaeologist Estácio da Veiga. Circular in shape, with eight lobes, this rare piece would have been used for performing



Cacela's Ablutions Font, s. h. 6th/12th century, National Archaeology Museum, Lisbon.



Cathedral, excavations in the cloister, Lisbon.

Lisbon



*St. George's Castle,
Lisbon.*

ritual ablutions. The letters, which are barely distinguishable, would have been part of a quotation from the *Qur'an*.

S. M.

I.1.c Cathedral

*Largo da Sé, tel: 21 886 67 52.
Entrance fee to cloister. Open: 9.00–17.00 daily.*

Close to the city's Porta Férrea (Iron Gate) there once stood the main Lisbon Mosque, on the site where the cathedral now stands. Building work began on the latter church in 539/1145, after the city's conquest by the Christians. According to contemporary descriptions, the mosque had seven naves and – in view of the architectural features that were later re-used – seems to have

been an adaptation of an earlier basilica. Recent archaeological excavations carried out inside the cathedral's Gothic cloister have unearthed several stages in the historical occupation of Lisbon and also an annex – possibly a washroom – of the mosque. Here, a store of silver coins minted in the end of 5th-b. 6th/f. h. 12th century was found hidden inside part of the plumbing system. These are now kept at the National Archaeology Museum.

C. T.

I.1.d St. George's Castle

*Rua do Chão da Feira.
Open: 9.00–20.00 daily.*

In the mid-6th/12th century, in a letter addressed to Osberno, it was stated: "To the north of the river is the city of Lisbon,

standing atop a rounded hill, whose fortifications, descending in flights, come down to the banks of the Tagus, being separated from this only by the wall”.

The Islamic citadel, with its own fortifications, occupied an area of four hectares on the top of this hill. In addition to the governor’s palace and the buildings used by his court, the rest of the area, which now forms the residential quarter of Santa Cruz, would have been occupied by the houses of the government officials and soldiers.

After centuries of successive reoccupations, restoration work, earthquakes and frequent neglect, little has remained visible of the old Islamic fortification at St. George’s Castle. There are a few remains of the citadel, but most of these were erased during the 15th and 16th centuries, when major rebuilding work was undertaken and the general structure of the castle was adapted to form royal palaces and reshaped to the taste of successive Portuguese kings and queens. For this reason, almost all of the decorative features to be found dotted about the castle precinct belong to 16th-century architectural models.

In the north-facing area of the castle (close to the Church of Menino de Deus), there still remains a short section and turret of the original Islamic wall, dating from the 5th/11th century.

S. M. / C. T.

Follow Rua do Chão da Feira and continue along Travessa do Funil. Then continue through Largo do Contador-Mor, turn left and follow the tramlines to Largo de Santa Luzia.

1.1.e The Moorish Wall

Section of wall close to the Igreja do Menino de Deus in Calçada do Menino de Deus.

Inside an enormous wall built around the whole city in the 14th century, it is still possible to see the old Moorish wall that joined the citadel to the riverside quarters at the end of 4th-b. 5th/b. 11th century.

This marriage of the two areas into one single body was confirmed by the building of a solid stone wall with, quadrangular towers, which was 2 km. thick.

The citadel, which had its own defensive system, occupied an area of four hectares on the top of the hill. On the western side, the exit from the *medina* was through the monumental Porta Férrea (Iron Gate). Beside the western suburbs, but further north, was the Porta da Alfafa (Wicket Gate). The Porta do Mar (Sea Gate) stood facing the beach.

The Moorish Wall, Lisbon.



Lisbon

Street in Alfama,
Lisbon.



On the eastern side was the so-called *Porta do Sol* (Sun Gate) or cemetery gate and, closer to the river, a large barbican protected the *Porta da Alfama* (Alfama Gate). A number of original sections from this imposing walled fortification can still be seen, notably the east-facing walls and turrets of the citadel close to the *Igreja do Menino de Deus* and the base of the *Capela de Santa Luzia*.

C. T.

Walk down Calçada do Menino de Deus and follow the tramline to Largo das Portas do Sol.

I.1.f Alfama Quarter

From Largo das Portas do Sol, walk down Rua Rosa Araújo, turn right and continue along Rua de São Miguel. Turn left into Beco do Mexias and left again along Rua de São Pedro, passing through Largo do Chafariz de Dentro, until you reach Chafariz d'el Rey.

The houses of Alfama tumble down to the river in a tangled labyrinth of narrow streets and steps. This residential quarter, where the Mediterranean tradition of cramped *medinas* was once again imposed, is today one of the most typical districts of Lisbon and undeniably the one that affords the city its most profound sense of history and character. Its name derives from the Arabic term for thermal springs: *al-hama*. In fact, hot-spring waters can still be found here and until quite recently were used by the local women to wash their clothes. In Islamic times, this was a residential quarter inhabited by fishermen and artisans and stood outside the walls of the city, with which it communicated through the gate known as the *Porta da Alfama*.

C. T.

Casa do Fado e da Guitarra Portuguesa.

Largo do Chafariz de Dentro, 1, Alfama, tel: 21 882 34 70.

Open: spring/summer: 10.00-18.00; autumn/winter: 10.00 -17.00

Closed: Tuesday and 1st January, 1st May and 25th December.

Cascading down the hillside from St. George's Castle are the residential quarters of Alfama and Mouraria, the oldest areas of Lisbon and a part of the urban fabric that most successfully withstood the destruction wreaked by the earthquake in 1755. Alfama had served, since Roman times, as the connection between the fortress and the river, whilst Mouraria opened onto the countryside to the north and west. The Arab presence in these two quarters can still be seen in their actual names, which have been preserved until the present day and continue to reveal the multicultural flavour that this area has always enjoyed, welcoming into its midst Christian, Muslim and Jewish populations. This multicultural aspect was further enhanced by the importance of the Port of Lisbon, especially from the 15th century onwards. Not only was there much coming and going of different crews, but there was also a sizeable black population of slaves and freedmen from Africa and Brazil, who came to settle in the area, particularly in Alfama.

This intermingling of influences in the characteristic environment of a port city inevitably gave rise to the area's own individual expressions of urban culture. Amongst these, the most notable is Fado, a musical form that was born in the popular quarters of Lisbon.

The links between Alfama and the port can be felt most acutely in the centre of the quarter, in the Square of Largo do



House of Fado and of the Portuguese Guitar, Lisbon.

Chafariz de Dentro. Its name derives from the fountain (*chafariz*) that can still be found there and once stood within (*dentro*) the old city walls, close to the Porta do Mar, the gate that opened onto the riverside district.

In this square, in the building known as Recinto da Praia, the Casa do Fado e da Guitarra Portuguesa has been installed, a museological space of cultural entertainment devoted to Fado. Through a succession of atmospheres recreated by audiovisual means, visitors are invited to learn about the history of Fado, the places where music was played and how and where it was disseminated. A thorough investigation of Fado's cultural heritage is illustrated through musical revues, radio and recordings, as well as its later inclusion in the cinema and details about its great singers and instrumentalists. The route taken now through the narrow streets and arches of Alfama, from the castle perched on high to the Casa do Fado, is in fact the path followed by Lisbon's popular culture, deeply rooted in a centuries-old dialogue between races and cultures.

Sintra

*The Moorish Wall and
Pena Palace, Sintra.*

1.2 SINTRA

*Information Office: Praça da República, 23,
tel: 21 923 11 57.*

In countless descriptions provided by Arab geographers, Sintra is always mentioned as being dependent upon Lisbon. Apart from a number of other small settlements that took advantage of the fertile soil of the region's valleys, the main centres of population would have been the Moorish Castle and the area where the Vila Palace now stands. High up in the mountains, the long perimeter wall (heavily rebuilt as a result of Romanticism in the 19th century) defended a small set-



tlement and also served as a temporary refuge for those from outside. In view of its mild climate, leafy woods and abundant supplies of water, Sintra seems to have been favoured as a summer residence and leisure spot by the nobility of Lisbon, both before and after its inclusion in the kingdom of Portugal.

The Moorish community remained a very dense one throughout the region. At the end of the 15th century, there was still mention of a Moorish Cemetery in Colares, which D. Manuel I gave to a private individual.

At the height of the period of Romanticism that swept across Europe in the 19th century, Sintra joined in with the Revivalist movement. This resulted in the blending of many of the region's historical features with visions of an exotic East, which at that time was undergoing a process of conquest and assimilation by various colonial powers. The Pena Palace thus came into being as a work that reflected the wishes of a prince consort of German origin. Likewise, the Monserrate Pavilion would have made no sense without the Indian and Moorish delirium that inspired its creation and was so fashionable amongst British aristocratic circles at the time.

C. T.

1.2.a Vila Palace

*Largo Rainha D. Amélia, tel: 21 910 68 40.
Entrance fee. Open: 10.00-13.00 (last admissions at 12.30) and 14.00-17.00 (last admissions at 16.30); closed on Wednesdays and public holidays.*

Surrounded by the houses of the present-day town of Sintra and occupying the whole of the top of a small hill overlooking one of the region's most luxuriant valleys, the palace stands out by virtue of the



extraordinary interplay between its different volumes and shapes. In more remote times, this was a small, fortified settlement where the inhabitants of the surrounding region would seek refuge in the event of danger. In the Islamic period, although it continued to perform this same role for a brief period, this small fortification was almost certainly rebuilt at the end of the 5th/11th century to adapt the area between the walls for recreational purposes and to serve as a country residence. Although there is no actual archaeological evidence of this, such a conclusion is suggested by its systematic use by the queens of the first Portuguese Dynasty. Major rebuilding work was undertaken to transform the area into a palace in the 15th and 16th centuries, and Moorish taste is echoed in a whole series of additional volumes that have been interlaced and juxtaposed to achieve an architectural synthesis of rare harmony. Small courtyards with babbling water and the gentle polychrome effect created by the use of glazed tiles have given the palace's interior one of the most beau-

tiful atmospheres in Mudejar art and in the whole of Portuguese architecture.

Vila Palace, Sintra.

C. T.

Leave the town by the Estrada da Pena.

1.2.b **Pena Palace**

Estrada da Pena, 2 km. south of Sintra. There are minibuses from here to the Palace, tel: 21 910 53 40.

Entrance fee. Open: 10.00-17.00 (winter); 10.00-18.30 (summer: June-September); closed on Mondays and public holidays.

High up in the Sintra hills, where previously there stood the 16th-century Monastery of Nossa Senhora da Pena, D. Fernando II built his legendary palace. This has since become the symbol of the king's personality and the defining image of the spirit of Romanticism that was prevalent at that time.

After purchasing the convent in 1838, the king had simply intended to repair the original building, but he ended up build-

Sintra



Pena Palace, Sintra.

ing a fortified palace that, in its first phase, had no overall guiding plan. However, roughly two years later, “His Majesty”, decided, “that the Convent should be transformed into a fortified palace, following the mixed Arabian, or Manueline, style of its origins”.

In 1842, after building strong outside walls crowned by an elegant arcade drawn straight from a neo-Moorish textbook, the king ordered the chapel yard to be enlarged. The area that is now referred to as the queen’s terrace was made more extensive by constructing “elegant arcades” in the Arabian style in order to allow for the formation of loggias.

The entrance gate, which is immediately followed by a drawbridge, provides some information on the symbolism that under-

lines its function as an “antechamber”. This chamber was to prepare the visitor for an understanding of the dreamlike (or perhaps real) delirium of the portico, an allegory of the creation of the world, which is sited a little further up the hill in the noble façade of the “new palace”.

The overall project was the work of the engineer Ludwige Eschwege, but the king significantly changed the decoration, giving the impression that the German’s proposal had been cast aside.

The portico known as the “Triton Arch” or the “allegory of the creation of the world” displays heavy symbolism connected to life itself, whether this is understood in the physical or spiritual sense. This leads to the arcaded courtyard, displaying in its passageway, together with

much exoticism, “an elegant ceiling of Arabian taste, imitating natural stalactites”. On part of the façade overlooking the courtyard is the famous window inspired by that found on the outer wall of the chapter house at the Convento de Cristo (Tomar). This window was certainly designed by D. Fernando and can now be considered as representing the very birth of the neo-Manueline style.

D. Fernando was not content simply to transpose this style to the Pena Palace, but instead produced an amalgam of Oriental, Moorish, Indian and maritime features, resulting in a compositional irregularity that is highly gratifying for those with a Romantic spirit.

The interior decoration of the palace seems to have been carried out without

any specific programme. That said, the fact remains that, at that time, the prevailing fashion was for decorators to effect a contrast between the styles used in different compartments, and such eclecticism provided a vast range of options, even though it was always guided by a taste for comfort.

It was not by mere chance that D. Fernando’s palace appeared in its present position crowning the rocks of Pena, and its emergence here has in fact to be understood in a much broader context.

M. R. A.

1.2.c **The Moorish Castle**

Estrada da Pena, Serra da Sintra, tel: 21 924 72 00.

Pena Palace, Sintra.

The Moorish Castle, Sintra.



Sintra



Monserrate Palace, panoramic of the garden, Sintra.

Open: 9.30-17.00 (winter); 10.00-18.00 (summer); closed on 1st January and 25th December.

Crowning the Sintra hills and covering an area of four hectares there can still be seen a long stretch of crenellated wall with rectangular turrets. Little now remains of this fortified settlement, which was still inhabited in the 5th/11th century and was certainly also used by shepherds and their flocks as a temporary shelter. The Prince Regent D. Fernando II, the same man who had rebuilt the nearby Pena Palace in the mid-19th century, was also the creator of the Romantic scenography that now sur-

rounds these beautiful ruins. The battlements, steps and parapets were adapted to form a path that affords visitors the chance to enjoy extraordinarily beautiful views over the surrounding landscape.

C. T.

I.2.d Monserrate Palace and Gardens

Estrada de Monserrate, tel: 21 923 12 01. It is only possible to visit the gardens, as the palace itself is closed. Entrance fee. Open: 9.00-18.00 (from October to March closed at 17.00); closed on 1st January, Easter, 1st May and 25th December.

The small Gothic palace that once belonged to De Visme and Beckford gave rise, some years later, to the “barbarous orientalism now to be seen at Monserrate, built by Viscount Cook in a fit of Moorish delirium”. When he set out to rebuild the old house, Francis Cook sought the collaboration of the London architect James T. Knowles Senior, who drew up the plans in 1858, leading to the appearance of a structure which was vaguely related to Moorish and Indian formulas.

The small oblong palace has a central cubical structure flanked by two round towers at either end, covered by elegant domes and reminiscent of stylised lotus flowers, a fact that affords them a strange exoticism. The openings in the white outside walls of Monserrate Palace contrast with these red domes and, above their lintels are ogival “fanlights”, filled with filigreed stone arabesques.

The gallery that runs across the inside of the palace was once remarkably beautiful. Due to a system of natural lighting, that was quite sophisticated for the time, the arches follow on from one another and

create areas of shadow and light that cause the rich stucco tracery to stand out in a quite surprising fashion.

When entering through the outside porch that looks out over the park in this capricious hallucination, and before reaching the octagonal lobby, visitors are obliged to pass through yet more fabulous stucco arches and thus to admire the finely decorated staircase leading to the upper floor. Immediately before the once truly breathtaking music room (to judge by the remains that can still be seen), there stood another dazzling room, previously lined with Venetian mirrors, with white marble fireplaces and fairy-tale chandeliers of Bohemian crystal.

In Monserrate, Sir Francis Cook did not merely limit himself to “erecting in an instant chimerical fantasies of architecture and sculpture” and “adorning the halls and galleries of that charming mansion with the most precious works of art”, for he was also greatly concerned with the park and gardens. A scientific element was introduced into this latter area. Its mentors must have been William Colebrook Stockdale, the Romantic landscape artist who was a frequent visitor to Portugal, and Thomas Cargill, a Lisbon doctor and friend of the owner, who must in turn have been helped by William Nevril, a specialist in the field of botany. All of these men received the support of the English gardener Francis Burt, who died in Portugal in 1877.

The marvellous palatial residence of Monserrate achieves such perfect harmony with its extraordinary park that all those who have the privilege to see it find its charms difficult to resist.

M. R. A.

For Santarém, take the IC19 road back towards Lisbon and then follow the A1 motorway in the direction of Santarém / Porto.

For Alenquer, return to Lisbon and take the A1 motorway as far as Carregado, then follow the signs to Alenquer.

For Óbidos, follow the A9 / CREL motorway to Loures and then continue along the A8-IC1 road as far as Torres Vedras / Caldas da Rainha, coming off at Óbidos.

Natural Park of Sintra / Cascais

Only a stone's throw from Lisbon, the Natural Park of Sintra / Cascais is the first “cultural landscape” to have been classified as a World Heritage Site. Those who visit the area today find themselves going back in time to a period when human life was shaped by (or did itself shape) a diversified landscape full of unexpected charms.

The peculiar climate of the Serra de Sintra, the result of a curious volcanic eruption some 80 million years ago, keeps the mountains swathed in a permanent mist that has given rise to dense green vegetation, patiently worked by human hand. Sintra, which was known in classical times as “Mons Lunae” (The Mountain of the Moon), became the refuge of kings, poets, hermits and aristocrats, who built palaces, mansions, country houses, cottages, convents and chapels, surrounded by parks filled with plants brought from all four corners of the world.

To the north, human communities occupied the plains of important streams, building small groups of houses and dividing the landscape into vineyards, vegetable patches and orchards enclosed by dry-stone walls or hedges made from reeds and canes, later becoming known as the “salioio” region.

Along the coast, Cabo da Roca, the headland “where the land ends and the sea begins” is the westernmost point of continental Europe. Amongst the variety of botanical species that are to be found here, the Armeria, pseudarmeria and Silene cintrana are exclusive to these rugged cliffs, over which fly sea birds and birds of prey, such as the crested cormorant and the

Alenquer

Castle, armory tower,
Alenquer.



peregrine falcon. It is still possible, on the coast, to find sandy beaches that have adapted to the strong winds of the Guincho and Raso area and the fossil dunes of Magoito and Oitavos.

Sites not to be missed by any visitor to the Natural Park of Sintra / Cascais are the Convento dos Capuchos, Adega de Colares, Azenhas do Mar, and the road from Cabo da Roca to Praia da Adraga.

C. G. / P. N.

Tourist Information: Rua General Alves Roçadas, 10-2º, 2710 Sintra, tel: 21 923 51 16/66.

Museu Municipal Hipólito Cabaço, tel: 263 73 09 06.

In the Islamic period, the small town of Alenquer, built close to a navigable stretch of the River Tagus, was an integral part of the network of urban centres linked to Lisbon by an intense river traffic. With Arruda, Xira, Azambuja and Benavente, it shared the bread-producing region of Ballata, whose products were sold in the capital, benefiting and controlling all the trade routes from Coruche, Tomar or Santarém.

Because of a lack of archaeological information, it is not possible to infer that there was any structure here prior to the buildings evidently erected in the Low Middle Ages, particularly those dating from the period of the Renaissance, which left the region with a number of impressive mon-

1.3 ALENQUER (option)

1.3.a Islamic Alenquer

Information: Tel: 263 73 09 00.

uments. On the walls of the *medina* – an enclosed and heavily populated area of roughly five hectares – a monumental fortified tower can be seen, the base of which would almost certainly have been part of the Muslim defensive system.

Unlike the castle, whose foundations may perhaps be revealed only by future excavations, it is possible today for people to visit the city walls and the fortified tower associated with them. There is a small archaeological museum with a collection of ceramic artefacts, mainly from the 14th century, although there are also some from the Islamic period.

C. T.

For Óbidos, take the Estrada Nacional No. 9 to Torres Vedras, then join the A8-IC1 road to Óbidos,

For Santarém, return to the A1 motorway and head north in the direction of Santarém / Porto.

1.4 ÓBIDOS (option)

1.4.a Historical town of Óbidos

Information: Rua Direita, tel: 262 95 92 31.

Before the widespread silting that was to transform the whole of Portugal's Atlantic coastline after the end of the Middle Ages, the lagoon known as Lagoa de Óbidos, which today is confined to the coastal area, would have reached almost to the foot of the hill. Here there was once a prosperous port flourishing beneath the shadow of the imposing castle and fortified town. In

Castle and historical town of Óbidos.



Santarém

Castle and riverside, Santarém.

In addition to a certain amount of archaeological evidence, the fact that the place-name of Óbidos derives directly from the Latin term *opidum* suggests that there was once an earlier fortress on this site before the mediaeval structure seen today. Written documents refer to the town's conquest by the first king of Portugal some years before he took Lisbon, and it is clear that at that time the settlement was already enclosed by sturdy walls. Although there is no direct reference to the Islamic period – except possibly for a few stones at the base of the Torre do Facho – this town deserves a visit for its excellent quality whitewashed houses contained within its walls. All of this historical area, which has remained well preserved in terms of

the original layout of its streets and architecture, has close connections with the Mediterranean tradition.

C. T.

Take the IP6 in the direction of Rio Maior and then continue along Estrada Nacional No. 114 to Santarém.

I.5 SANTARÉM

Information: Rua Capelo e Ivens, 63, tel: 243 30 44 37.

The city of Santarém (previously known as Scalabis, the capital of the Roman *con-*

ventus) dominates the immense plains of the Ribatejo, the former territory of Balata, which had been referred to and praised by both Roman and Arab chroniclers. The river continuously flooded the land here and the farming techniques used were compared by the chronicler al-Himyari to those used on the mud flats of the River Nile.

Apparently, Santarém was organised into three quite distinct nuclei. The citadel was certainly protected by a wall and had three gates, continuing as far as the area of São João de Alporão. Close to the River Tagus and around the church dedicated to Saint Irene, the city's patron saint, there spread the suburb of Alfange and in particular the suburb of Ribeira, which formed the most important nucleus of the Islamic city.

Due to the continuation of this important Christian cult, as proved by the very name of the city (Xantarin), a sizeable Mozarab population was to remain, particularly in the riverside areas.

C. T.

1.5.a Santarém Municipal Museum - São João de Alporão

Largo Zeferino Sarmento, tel: 243 30 44 40. Entrance fee. Open: 9.30-12.30 and 14.00-17.30; closed on Mondays and public holidays.

In São João de Alporão, there are three remarkable architectural capitals, which have been carefully documented since the end of the 19th century. Two of them can



be attributed to the period of the *caliphs* and the other to the Almoravid period. The older ones are finely carved pieces, where it is possible to note a progression in the use of geometric patterns, based upon classical references such as Corinthian volutes and acanthus leaves. The abacus, however, begins to reveal the use of a complex and progressively more abstract tracery. This decorative system makes it possible to suggest that these pieces be from a period after the rule of the *caliphs*, so that they are probably from the 6th/12th century. In view of the cartouches and their religious inscriptions, these capitals must once have belonged to a mosque, of which they now remain as the only testimony.

Capital of White Marble, 6th/12th century, Santarém Municipal Museum, São João de Alporão.

C. T.