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Presentation of the region

Geography and Human Temporality



Located a few kilometres from Lisbon, the “Oeste” Tourism Region is formed by eleven districts that are localized between the Atlantic Ocean and the rocky massive of Serra de Montejunto.

Along the coast, the Berlenga island observes the permanent spectacle of an everlasting vivid and creative sea.

In the countryside with a pleasant climate, nature has been extremely generous in the construction of a landscape fulfilled by hills and valleys, where Atlantic’s wind embraces the vineyards.

Cities and villages stand in time and the countryside combines in shades of green colours sprinkled by the white of the housing.

Land and sea, a magnificent set that makes the visitant ecstatic and enjoying the Nature.

The region is a community united by the same feeling of heritage, a single identity, although very diversifying by its singularity of the eleven districts: Alenquer, Arruda dos Vinhos, Bombarral, Cadaval, Caldas da Rainha, Lourinhã, Óbidos, Peniche, Rio Maior, Sobral de Monte Agraço and Torres Vedras.

The people of the western region carry with them some traces blended by the ancestral inheritance of northern, predominantly Celtic peoples, Phoenicians from the South and above all Romans and Arabs.

The criss-crossing of these cultures has resulted in a tradition of openness to other nationalities, and in the hospitality in which the western region takes great proud.

Some of the most remote testimonies of human presence in the “Oeste” are the archaeology resorts (stations): Furninha in Peniche, Cave da Nova da Columbeira near Bombarral (Palaeolithic Period) and also various clues spread throughout the area of Rio Maior such as Cabeço do Porto Marinho, Arruda dos Pisões and others that have come from Pre-Palaeolithic. From the Chalcolithic period remained in the area of Torres Vedras, among other, the important Zambujal habitat, revealing a human presence of a higher development and those of Barro and Cabeça da Arruda, and in the surroundings of Cadaval the Pragança habitat.

From a more recent period there are the clues that Romans have left us namely the Kiln (ceramic oven) recently discovered in Peniche proving an industrial activity in the place that once was an island. There is also the unexplored Civitas de Eburobritium (city of Eburobritium), recently identified near the village of Óbidos.

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Cultural Patrimony and History

In this region there is many built patrimony worthy being retained. Archaeology resorts (stations), historical casters or roman settlements, conjoin with Arab castles, medieval monasteries and churches, 16th century fortresses, 17th and 18th manor-houses and also a very excellent group of examples of Modern Art Architecture.



Castles, Convents and Churches



The numerous buildings in the zone also corroborate Arab presence. Extraordinaire examples of this presence are the Castles of Alenquer, Torres Vedras and Óbidos, the last in a special way as it is an authentic jewel of architecture that has been extremely preserved.

The Convent of Graça in the city of Torres Vedras, Convent of Saint Francisco in Alenquer and Covent of Saint António in Varatojo (where a community of Franciscan monks still live today), a considerable number of Churches and other buildings, report us to the medieval era, giving certainty to a significant of this historical period are: Church of Saint Leonardo at Atouguia da Baleia, Torre de Lafetat (tower) in



Bombarral, the Mother Church of Lourinhã, the Chapel of Nossa Senhora das Neves at Serra de Montejunto, the ox stall at Atouguia da Baleia, the Church of Saint João da Ribeira in the surroundings of Rio Maior, the place and the ruins of the Church of Salvador do Mundo at Sobral de Monte Agraço, the Palace Residence at Serra d'El Rei and, yet, the great urban environment of the

Óbidos centre, where the scene of buildings transports you to, so vividly, even to centuries beyond time.

Manuelino, Renascence and Baroque Styles

The Manuelino (a typical and exclusive Portuguese style), Renascence and Baroque are styles well represented in the region, mainly in the religious context, with numerous examples, such

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as the Mother Church of Nossa Senhora do Pópulo in Caldas da Rainha, the Church of Misericórdia in Lourinhã or the Church of Saint Quintino at Sobral de Monte Agraço.



However, the different styles are delightfully mixed with Manuelino in civil architecture among others we can name the Palace of Gorjões in Bombarral, the Baroque Fountain of Arruda dos Vinhos, the Aqueduct of Óbidos, the Lighthouses of Cabo Carvoeiro and Duque de Bragança at Berlenga island, the Fountain of Canos in Torres Vedras, the former military veterans' house of Runa, the Fountain of Cinco Bicas and the Thermal Hospital (Spa) in Caldas da Rainha.

Tiles



The spectacular tiles, mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries, that decorate Churches and other buildings of the “Oeste” region are worth withstanding. In this context, special importance is given to the group of temples in Peniche where Churches such as Nossa Senhora dos Remédios, Nossa Senhora da Conceição, Nossa Senhora da Ajuda and Misericórdia set up as a remarkable gathering of 18th century tiles.

Also worthy of mention, are the tile-panels of the Convent of Graça in Torres Vedras, those of the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Socorro in Bombarral, the Church of Saint Sebastião at Serra d’El Rei, and in the magnificent village of Óbidos, those of the Church of Saint Mary and the Chapel of Senhora da Piedade.

It would be impossible not to suggest the tiles at the rail way stations of Óbidos, Caldas da Rainha and Bombarral. The walltile show scenes from the rural/pastoral common life, in the beginning of the 20th century.

Painting

“Oeste” also has a generous offer in the area of painting. It is possible to appreciate in many different places, the most divers artistic expression and painters. Extraordinary panels of the School of Gregório Lopes, a work done by Josefa d’Óbidos – a 17th century paintress of undeniable value – that also presents her work in many churches of the region such as the Church of Saint Mary in Óbidos and Church of Misericórdia in Peniche.



Other patrimonial wealth is the outstanding panel that represents Saint John at Pátmos, a famous work piece done by the so-called Master of Lourinhã, patent in the Church of Misericórdia in Peniche.



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Military Architecture



The present military architecture reflects the strategic importance that the region always had in the national defence context.

Apart from the already mentioned Castles and Castles, a natural relevance is given to the coast defence Fortresses, by the grandness of the work and importance of the protectness of the national integrity, for example: in Paimogo, the one in the Berlengas island called Saint João Baptista and the majestic fortress of Peniche that had a considered political importance in the 20th century. All these edifications are from the 17th century. Of a more recent provenience are the fortresses of Linha de Torres that in the beginning of the 19th century served efficiently in the defence of Lisbon during the French invasions, outstanding the fortress of Saint Vicente in Torres Vedras for its state of preservation.

Modern Art

An admirable set of thirty buildings with several characteristics from Modern Art can be observed in Caldas da Rainha.

Those are great examples of this modern style in the beginnings of the 20th century and make integrant part of the historic centre of the city.

Museums

“Oeste” has a dozen of admirable and important museums. For example, if you visit Caldas da Rainha you will have access to the largest number of museums in any city of the interior of Portugal.

In fact, it constitutes an extraordinary sum of artistic richness. Firstly with Museum of José Malhoa, with a notable



collection of paintings and sculptures, secondly the Museum-Ateliers António Duarte and João Fragoso, grouped in the Art Centre, where the assets of those well-known sculptors are exposed, the Museum of Ceramics and the House-Museum of Saint Rafael, both dedicated to ceramics artists.

The valuable archaeological and ethnographic hints of the region find notable distinction in the Museums of Torres Vedras, Óbidos, Bombarral and Alenquer. This last one, called Museum Hipólito Cabaco, by itself, contains over forty thousand pieces.

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The one existing in Lourinhã, specially dedicated to the Jurassic Period, contains the biggest



collection of dinosaur's eggs in the world and deserves, by its didactic value, a detailed visit.

Reference must be made to the importance of the contemporary figurative paintings, assets of the Museum João Mário at Alenquer. As well as the one of religious art and painting existing in the Museum of Centro de Apoio

Social in Runa, once the Veteran's Home.

In Peniche, in the Municipal Museum, located in the fortress of the town – a former political prison from the “Salazar period” (the so called New State) – apart from a section dedicated to the anti-fascist resistance, various ethnographic collections are exposed, where the famous bobbin lace is highly revealed. As for bobbin lace, it is worth mentioning that, being an activity lost in the memory of times, it is now re-arising and there are many women from Peniche that dedicate themselves to its implementation, creating marvellous pieces with nature stylised themes.