

Walk Through Spain and Portugal from 1/26—3/22/2026

Results of Week 7: 3/9—3/15/2026

During this week we collectively walked 402 miles and had 22 participants. Sources for photos are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. The green line on map of Spain and Portugal indicates places we visited each week. A magenta line on the entire map is our proposed route for our 8 week walk map with major cities marked with magenta dots.

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SPAIN AND PORTUGAL MAP



We Left Lisbon on Monday morning, the Shrine of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, or Solar da Padroeira, in Vila Viçosa, about 99 miles east of Lisbon.



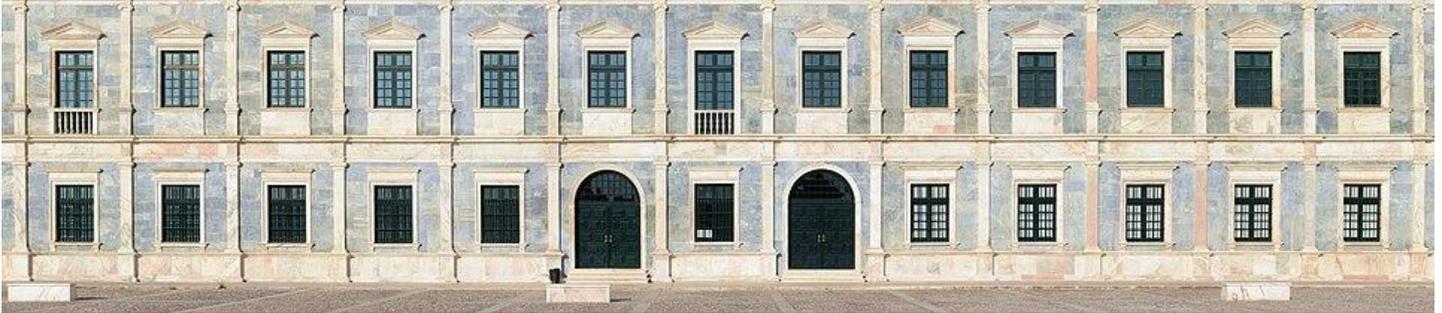
Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior, and interior .

This shrine became more popular after the King of Portugal named Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as Portugal's patron saint. The other name for the shrine - Solar da Padroeira—roughly translates to Home of the Patron Saint.

King Dom João IV offered the kingdom and the crown to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in 1646. Since then, no King has worn the crown of Portugal. Our Blessed Lady is the Queen of Portugal; she was crowned in Vila Viçosa.

There is a Catholic military order known as the Order of the Immaculate Conception of Vila Viçosa. It is an order of knights from the House of Braganza. These knights come from the former Royal Family, the House of Braganza. This order was formed in 1818 by the King to protect the Spiritual Sovereign, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. This order of knighthood was comprised of those men who had proved loyal to the king and devoted Catholics. Over time those appointed to the order were those who had provided some personal service for the king or the royal house.

Even after the country became a republic, and all other State orders came under the control of the republican government, the House of Braganza Dukes maintained control of the Order of the Immaculate Conception of Vila Viçosa. Alvesgaspar, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, façade of the ducal place, below.



The Sanctuary Church of Our Lady of the Conception is located behind the walls of the Ducal Palace. The 1755 earthquake damaged the shrine which has since been renovated and had other restoration work over the years.

The church has many historical and rare artistic pieces. There are beautiful tiles, a tabernacle from the 17th century, a relic of the sacred crown of thorns, and an original 1300's sculpture of Our Lady. There are also gilded wood carvings, oil paintings, and valuable jewels.

We then turned south and headed to Évora, about 30 miles away. Évora has a population of



approximately 50,000. The city received World Heritage status in 1986 for its historical center. The city has been populated since at least 5,000 BC and perhaps longer than that. Megaliths are groups of large standing stones near the city indicating that the area was occupied and are dated at around 50,000 years old. Some of the stones clearly have carvings on them but others are worn by time into smooth surfaces. that have some carvings on them. The picture left is of the nearby Vale Maria do Meio cromlech but there are other cromlechs around the city also.

Ángel M. Felicísimo from Mérida, España, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons. We stopped to see them on our way into town.

By 80 BC, there was a Roman city in this location. There are still parts of the Roman walls, aqueducts, and temples. Below are some pictures of these Roman remains which we saw as we made our way through the city.

thirdspphoto, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, walls below left. Norbert Nagel, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, center.

Ingo Mehling, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, aqueduct, below, right.



The city was occupied at later dates by the Visigoths, then the Moors and by 1166, the city answered to Catholic Kings. Many of the kings used the city for their court or at least one of their courts. The King decided Evora needed a Cathedral and began the first one in 1184 and it was finished by 1204. But the cathedral was small and needed to be enlarged. The new additions occurred around 1280 to 1340. And since then, there have been other additions and renovations to the cathedral. Now it is the largest medieval cathedral in Portugal.

Ingo Mehling, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior view of Cathedral, below left. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic,



Évora Cathedral, lateral wall, and transept, right below. Georges Jansoone, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Nave, and altar, right.



Évora Cathedral is constructed from heavy rose

granite. Like other churches in the area, the Cathedral has battlements around it and decorative arcaded corbels.

The floor plan for this cathedral is modeled after the Lisbon Cathedral. It has some lovely art pieces, including a sculpture on the altar done by Bellini. We were able to attend Mass while we were visiting the cathedral.

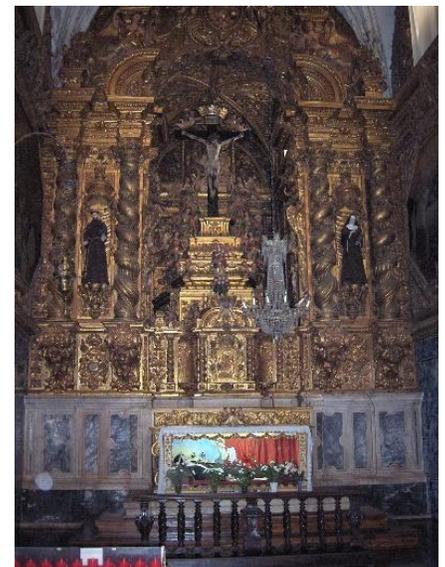
Next, we visited the Convent and Church of São Francisco, or simply the Church of São Francisco. It was built between 1480 and 1510 in Gothic – Manueline architectural style. In 1910, Portugal named it a National Monument.



Concierge.2C, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior, left. Georges Jansoone, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar right.

The convent of St. Francis was the first to be built by the Jesuits in Portugal. It was built in the 1200's. Various renovations occurred in the convent and church, with a major renovations in the latter part of the

1400's. As a result, the church is considered one of the most impressive buildings in Portugal, even today. The Chapel of Bones, shown below, was constructed when there was no more room in the graveyard of the cathedral.





Alonso de Mendoza, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, chapel of the bones, left. During the reign of King Afonso V (1443-1481) the Convent of São Francisco was elevated to the status of Royal Chapel during the time period. King Alfonso V would stay with his retinue in the convent; the king also gave many treasures to the convent. The Convent then received the title of Golden Convent.

Then came a period of less prosperity and even the loss of independence for the convent. It was during this lean period that the Chapel of

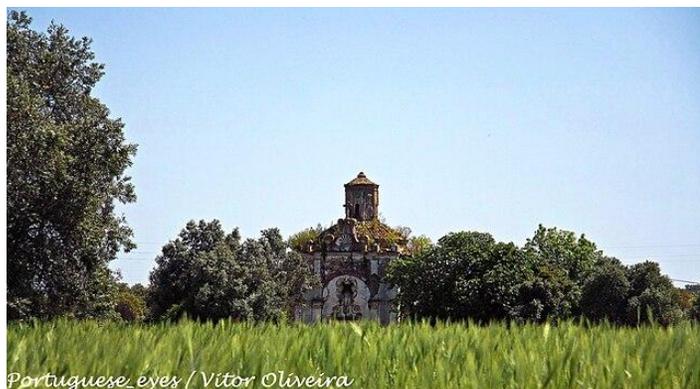
Bones was built to remind the community that life did not last forever. In the 1700's, the church received donations for private burials in chapels, which allowed for new enhancements in the church such as new altarpieces. Then in 1834, all of the nation's convents and monasteries were closed and the lands were absorbed into community property. Initially, the convent was used for Évora's courts until 1895; at that time, the convent was in terrible disrepair and the decision was made to demolish the convent portion, The church was spared because it was being used as a parish church, known as of São Pedro.

We had one more site to see in Évora, the Convent of Nossa Senhora do Espinheiro. This site is a former monastery of the Order of St. Jerome. It is now used as a hotel, although the church remains functional. The monastery was built in circa 1458 and has a UNESCO World Heritage designation. It was originally founded to receive pilgrims who were visiting the area. When the monasteries and convents were closed in 1834, the Portuguese government took ownership of the building. The government later sold it and as we have seen before, it was left to crumble. Most recently, the convent was purchased, restored by Manuel Gabriel Lopes, and became a hotel. But the Church of Our Lady of Espinheiro remains an integral part of the hotel.



flowcomm, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Church front of church and altar. Harvey Barrison from Massapequa, NY, USA, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, cloisters.

Then we headed south and slightly east to two more pilgrimage sites near Viana do Alentejo.



Portuguese eyes / Vitor Oliveira

Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons The first was the chapel of Senhor Jesus do Cruzeiro which is north of town of Viana do Alentejo. It appeared to have Baroque style elements. Inside the church is a single room. Most of the religious elements such as the altar have been removed but some paintings on the walls are still visible but in poor condition. It appears to have been abandoned but the doors were unlocked so we looked inside but were disappointed by the

empty interior. So, we continued on to the Shrine of Nossa Senhora de Aires, near Viana do Alentejo. In English, this means the Shrine of Our Lady of Pity.

Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior left. Rosino, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar, center, and stone image of Our Lady, right.



In this shrine there is stone image of the old patroness, Our Lady of Pity. In the image Our Lady is seated

holding the deceased Jesus, after his crucifixion. For many of the pilgrims who come here to pray, the image is soothing. There are many pictures of loved ones and drawings of people who are ill being tended by Our Lady. One long corridor contains hundreds of photos.

The church is Baroque in style and was started in 1743 and completed in 1804. It replaced an earlier hermitage that had been on the site. The stone image of Our Lady is in a niche in the top part of the carved wooden altar. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to see since it is small and high up on the altar. The stone image was found by a farmer plowing his fields after the Moors had been expelled from Portugal. The image is believed to have been carved in the 1400's. We spent time here in prayer and then viewed the various drawings and some of the photos before moving on to our next stop, about 50 miles south and a bit west.

A Royal Basilica in the heart of the village. Forcastro, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, view of village with Basilica in the background right.



Castro Verde was our next stop on our pilgrimage. It has a population of about 7,000 so it is not a large town. The town was officially chartered around the 1500's but there is evidence of other groups having spent time in this area years as early as 2800 BC, including Neanderthals, Celts, Romans, Visigoths, and Moors.

An important battle that allowed Portugal to become a nation occurred around this area when the Prince of Portugal defeated the Moors at the Battle of Ourique in 1139. After that battle, the Prince was declared to be the King of Portugal. However, the Moors were not completely vanquished from the region until

1234, under the Portuguese king at that time, King Sancho II. In 1573 the Portuguese king, Sebastian, ordered a Royal Basilica built to commemorate the importance of the Battle of Ourique.

The new basilica, officially known as the Our Lady of the Conception, is referred to by many as the Royal Basilica. It has, of course, been renovated through the ages since it was originally built. It is the main church for Castro Verde and the surrounding areas. The interior is well-decorated with beautiful tiles and paintings, such as those on the ceiling. Patrick Nouhailler from Genève, Suisse, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, both images



Many of the images celebrated the victory over the Moors.

There is another church in the town, the Church of the Wounds of the Savior. An earlier church was on this site believed to have been founded by King Afonso Henriques. The current church, however, is from



the 1600' to the 1700's. This newer church is pictured below. It is a simpler church but also commemorates the Battle of Ourique in various artworks.



Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

It is dedicated to Our Lady of Medicine. There are paintings in the church that represent an apparition known as the Miracle of Ourique, a visitation by Jesus. This apparition was seen by King Afonso Henriques just a few miles from Castro Verde.

After exploring the smaller church, we then went 4.3 miles outside of the town to visit the Source of Miracle of Saint Michael, a small building, housing a well. It was

built in 1714.

Forcastro, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right.

Abílio Pereira de Carvalho, a historian, was researching documents beneath the altar in the Royal Basilica in Castro Verde in the mid-1900's. In these documents was information about the Font of St. Michael. The documents described the curative powers of the well. His research results were published by Castro Verde in the later 1900's. Apparently many pilgrims went to the well in earlier times and were cured. Currently the site is being restored but we could see the outside of the small building. The site of the temple and water well has been in a phase recovery since 2009.



Next, we headed southwest toward Sagres. But first we stopped at the area around Raposeria in the municipality of Vila do Bispo to see the Hermitage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In Portuguese it is written as Ermida de Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe. This whole southern section of Portugal between the Atlantic and the Spanish border is called the Algarve region.

The hermitage is believed to be the site where Prince Henry the Navigator used to pray before his voyages around the world. We went to the hermitage chapel and also to visit a small museum located nearby. The museum focuses Prince Henry.



Roundtheworld, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

The chapel was built of sandstone and is kept white -washed. There are eight columns supporting the domed ceiling. The capitals atop the columns have some of the most realistic designs on them in all of Portugal and those designs include human heads, shells, branches,



and other types of foliage.

Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, capital carvings, right.

We noticed a small rose window above the entry door. Apparently, it is one of the few medieval buildings that survived the 1755 earthquake, so it is one of the oldest religious buildings in the area. It is also among the first Portuguese churches dedicated to our Lady of Guadalupe. I always think of a hermitage as a small building so I was surprised to hear this one could hold about 400 people. Because the church's architecture and somewhat plain façade. It seems likely that it was built by the Knights Templar in the mid-1200's. It must have been rededicated at a later date to our Lady of Guadalupe. There is some evidence that there were renovations in later centuries.

Then we turned south to go to the southern Atlantic coast of Portugal to Sagres. It is the most southern point in Portugal and the place in Portugal where the Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas meet. It has a population of less than 2,000 people.



In the early 1400's, Prince Henry, the Navigator, lived in the area and was responsible for building a major fortress here to protect this section of Portugal. It is known as the Fortress of Sagres.

Ana Rey from Sevilla, España, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

In 1587, Sir Francis Drake, a British privateer, brought 800 men ashore and fought a two-hour battle for the fortress, destroyed much of the fortifications around the fortress, and was able to claim the arms from the fortress for his crew's victory.

There is a church at the fortress known as Santa Maria. It was dedicated

to Nossa Senhora da Graça (Eng: Our Lady of Grace) in 1519. There are some interesting pieces of art in the church. There is a statue of St. Francis of Assisi and another of St. Vincent, both seemed to be carved in wood. In the 1990's a beautiful altar piece from the church was moved to the Church of Nossa Senhora Da Graça in the Fortress of Sagres, from the nearby Fort of Santo António de Belixe from the Chapel of St. Antony. After our visit to the fortress of Sagres, we visited the second fortress.



Georges Jansoone, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. The altar piece is shown below, left.

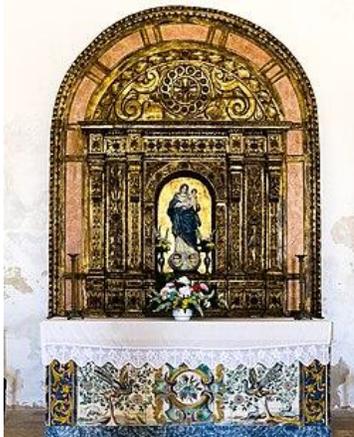
Marty B, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar piece, left.

Fort of

Santo António de Belixe also known as Fort of Saint Anthony of Beliche.

Dogpochi, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right.

was built on the top of a cliff about 283 feet above sea level. Although the exact date of its construction is unknown, it contains a coat of arms of King Sebastain who was king in the third quarter of the 16th century so the fort was most likely built around that time. It, too, was raided by Sir Francis Drake during the same year as the other fortress and suffered serious damage. The damage was repaired under King Phillips the III but wasn't completed until the early-17th century. It was again damaged during an earthquake in 1755 but the current fortress is built upon the initial structure.



At the fort there is a small chapel dedicated currently to St. Anthony. It is shown below. As you can see it is small. We could not go inside. It was dedicated originally to St. Catherine but we could not find out why the dedication was changed.

Bextrel, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below left.

In the mid-1960's the fortress was adapted to serve as a tourist resource. Unfortunately, nothing was done to prevent erosion of the cliff face where the fortress stands and there are

real concerns that it might tumble into the sea so it was closed in the 1990's. The loss of the chapel is of particular concern since it sits right at the edge of the cliff. While we could not get into the buildings, it was interesting to see the layout of the fort. We then spent a little time enjoying the seashore before ending our week here.

Thanks for participating!

Your Tour Director,

Kathy Scharer