

Coimbra

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Coimbra is a university city on the Mondego River in central Portugal. Its old town climbs a steep hill, with the historic university at the top. Students have shaped the city for centuries. Their black capes, songs and traditions are part of daily life.

The city suits a one- or two-night stop between Porto and Lisbon. It is best for travelers who like history, libraries, churches and slow walks. The old town is compact, but the hills are steep.

When to visit

April, May and October are the best times. Days are warm and the city is green. Summer is very hot, so plan sightseeing for the morning and evening. Winter is mild but wet.

The biggest event is **Queima das Fitas**, the student festival in May. It has concerts, parades and the Serenata Monumental on the steps of the old cathedral. Hotels fill early, so book ahead.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 19°	6° / 0°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 21°	7° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	8° / 3°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 28°	10° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	12° / 8°	Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 38°	15° / 12°	Calm winds · Up to 5 days above 35°
July	Fair Fair for sightseeing	34° / 41°	17° / 13°	22 sunny days · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 13 days above 35°
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	35° / 41°	18° / 14°	23 sunny days · Calm winds · Up to 14 days above 35°
September	Fair Fair for sightseeing	31° / 38°	16° / 12°	Calm winds · Up to 6 days above 35°
October	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	14° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 23°	9° / 4°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 19°	7° / 1°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: April, May, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Universidade de Coimbra is the reason most people come. It sits on the hilltop in the former royal palace and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- B Biblioteca Joanina is a Baroque library from the 18th century, inside the university. Entry is by timed ticket, so book ahead.
- C Torre da Universidade rises above the university courtyard. It is the city's best-known landmark and gives wide views over the roofs.
- D Igreja da Sé Velha is a solid Romanesque cathedral from the 12th century. It is one of the best-preserved churches of its age in Portugal.
- E Igreja de Santa Cruz holds the tombs of the first two kings of Portugal. Its church and cloister are in the lower town.
- F Museu Machado de Castro is the main art museum, set in the old bishop's palace. Below it are Roman underground galleries.
- G Jardim Botânico da Universidade de Coimbra is a quiet 18th-century garden below the university. It is a good place to rest after the climb.
- H Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Velha are the ruins of a Gothic monastery. The river flooded them for centuries, and they were excavated in the 1990s.
- I Convento de Santa Clara a Nova is the 17th-century convent on the hill across the river. It holds the tomb of Queen Saint Isabel and has a fine view of the city.
- J Portugal dos Pequenitos is a park of small-scale Portuguese houses and monuments. It is a good stop for families.

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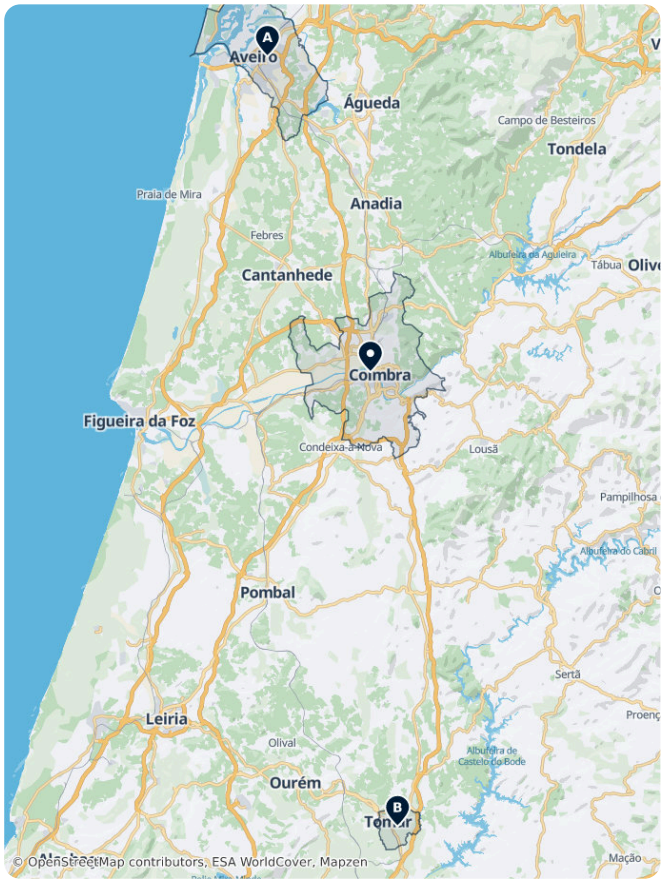
What to experience

- **Fado de Coimbra**: This style of fado is different from Lisbon fado. It grew from student songs. Look for evening concerts in the old town, where singers often wear the black student cape.
- **Queima das Fitas**: Join the student parades and concerts in May. It is the biggest party of the year.
- **Sunset at the viewpoint**: Watch the light change over the river from Penedo da Saudade, a hillside garden with poems carved in stone.
- **Student traditions in autumn**: New students arrive in the first weeks of the academic year. You may see the capes, songs and parades in the streets.

Day trips

Coimbra is a good base for short trips. These are listed from closest to farthest.

- **Conímbriga** (about 20 minutes by car): one of the best-preserved Roman sites in Portugal, with mosaics and a small museum.
- **Figueira da Foz** (about 40 minutes by train): a wide sandy beach town on the Atlantic coast.
- **Buçaco Forest and Luso** (about 40 minutes by car): a walled forest with a palace hotel, trails and a spa village.
- Ⓐ Aveiro (about 55 minutes by train): canals, colorful boats and Art Nouveau houses.
- Ⓑ Tomar (about 1 hour by car): a Templar castle and convent, also a UNESCO site.



Where to explore

Coimbra sits halfway between Portugal's two big cities. Porto is to the north. Lisbon is to the south. Both are easy to reach by train.

Getting there

- **By air**: Coimbra has no commercial airport. Most travelers fly into Porto (OPO), about 120 km north, or Lisbon (LIS), about 200 km south. Continue by train.
- **By train**: Fast trains from Porto and Lisbon stop at Coimbra-B, the main station. A short shuttle train links it to the Coimbra station in the city center. Book on CP Comboios de Portugal.
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches run from Porto, Lisbon and many Portuguese towns to the central coach station.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: City buses are run by SMTUC. Buy tickets at SMTUC shops, at sales points near the stations, or in the SMTUC app. See fares on SMTUC.
- **Elevator**: The Elevador do Mercado links the lower town with the hill. It saves a steep climb.
- **On foot**: The lower town is flat, but the old town on the hill is very steep. Wear good shoes. Taxis help for the climb to the university.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The lower town is flat and easy. The old town on the hill is steep, with cobbled streets and many steps.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Steep hills and cobbles make cycling hard in the old town. The riverside is flatter.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the city. The old town is steep, narrow and hard to park in. A car helps for Conímbriga and Buçaco.
- **Parking**: Park outside the center and walk or take a bus. SMTUC runs car parks near Coimbra-B station and at Parque Verde do Mondego.
- **Tolls**: Many motorways such as the A1 charge tolls. Ask your rental company about the transponder.

Food & drink

Look for **chanfana**, goat stewed in red wine, and **leitão da Bairrada**, roast suckling pig from the nearby Bairrada region. For a sweet snack, try *pastéis de Santa Clara*, small pastries made with egg and almond.

For a meal, walk the streets around Praça do Comércio and Rua Quebra Costas in the lower town. Small restaurants and student cafés are close together there.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Safety & health

Coimbra is a safe city. Pickpockets can work in crowded places, so keep your bag closed. The main risk is the terrain. Old stone streets and steps are steep and slippery when wet. Tap water is safe to drink.

History

The Romans called the town Aeminium. In the 12th century it became the capital of the new Kingdom of Portugal. The capital moved to Lisbon in 1255. The first two kings are buried at Igreja de Santa Cruz. The cathedral Igreja da Sé Velha dates from the same time.

The university moved here for good in 1537. It took over the royal palace on the hill, and the city has centered on it since. The Roman remains below Museu Machado de Castro show how old the site is.

The best-known legend is the love of Prince Pedro and Inês de Castro. Inês was killed in 1355 near the Quinta das Lágrimas gardens. Pedro later became king and had her honored as queen.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



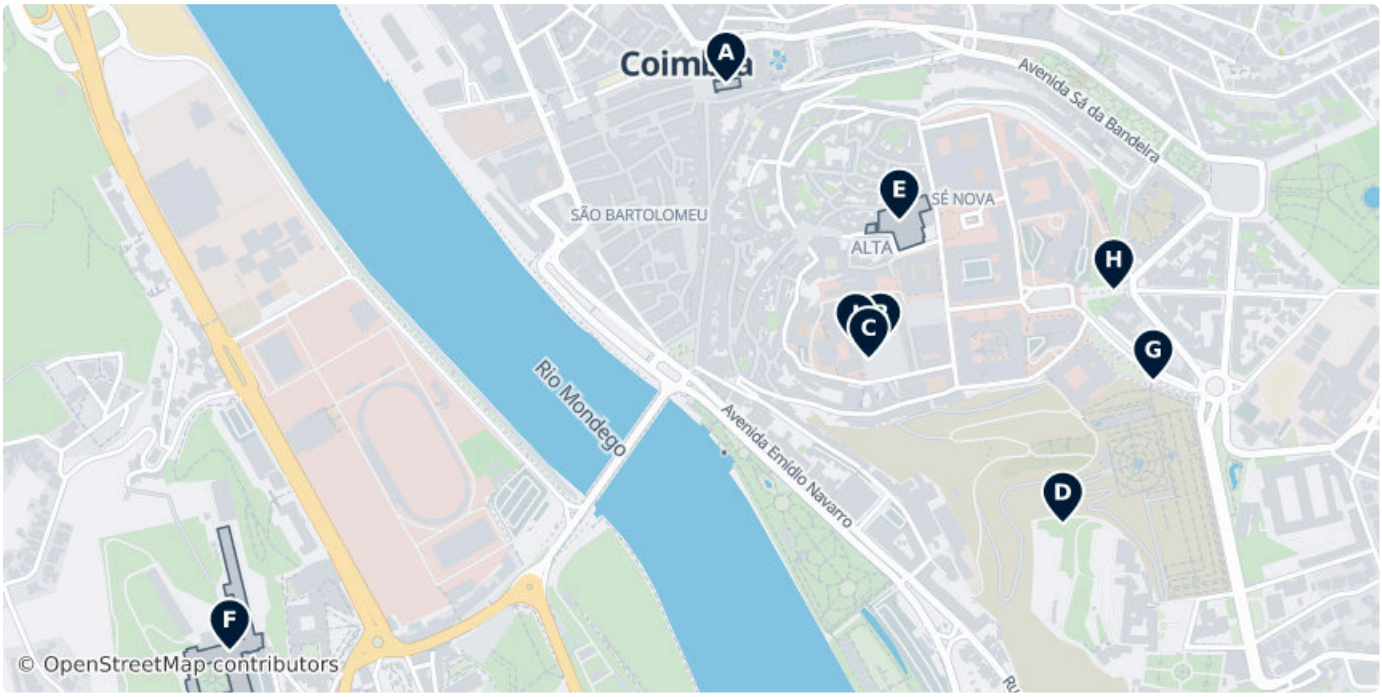
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Coimbra Essentials

Coimbra serves as Portugal's historic academic center, home to one of Europe's oldest universities and the ornate 18th-century Baroque Biblioteca Joanina. The city's landscape is defined by the 12th-century Monastery of Santa Cruz, the resting place of Portugal's first kings, and the National Museum Machado de Castro, built over a preserved Roman cryptoporticus. From the 16th-century Aqueduct of São Sebastião to the lush University Botanical Garden, Coimbra preserves a dense heritage of Manueline architecture and medieval sacred sites.





A Monastery of Santa Cruz

The Monastery of the Holy Cross, also known as the Church of the Holy Cross, is a National Monument in Coimbra, Portugal.

Coimbra (40.21094, -8.42876)

igrejascruz.webnode.pt, +351 239 822 941

B Universidade de Coimbra

Founded in 1290, this UNESCO World Heritage site is one of the world's oldest universities. It occupies the former Paço das Escolas, featuring an 18th-century clock tower and the Great Hall of Acts.

Pátio das Escolas, 3000-402 Coimbra, Portugal (40.20740, -8.42600)



C Biblioteca Joanina

A mid-18th-century Baroque library commissioned by King John V. It features three grand rooms decorated with gilded wood carvings and frescoed ceilings, housing over 200,000 volumes dating from the 12th century.

4 Rua Doutor Guilherme Moreira, Coimbra 3000210, Portugal (40.20720, -8.42622)



D Botanical Garden of the University of Coimbra

The Botanical Garden of the University of Coimbra is a botanical garden in Coimbra, Portugal.

Coimbra 3000, Portugal (40.20496, -8.42276)

Oct-Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:30
Apr-Sep Mo–Su	09:00–20:00

uc.pt/jardimbotanico



E National Museum Machado de Castro

The Machado de Castro National Museum is an art museum in Coimbra, Portugal, named after the renowned Portuguese sculptor Joaquim Machado...

Largo Dr. José Rodrigues, 3000-236 Coimbra, Portugal (40.20908, -8.42567)

Tu–Su	10:00–18:00

mnmachadodecastro.imc-ip.pt, +351 239 853 070



F Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova

The Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova is a monastery in Coimbra, Portugal.

(Unnamed Road), Santa Clara 3040, Portugal (40.20323, -8.43759)



G Aqueduto de São Sebastião

Also known as Arcos do Jardim, this 16th-century aqueduct was built on the remains of a Roman structure. It features 21 arches spanning the area near the Botanical Garden and the university campus.

31 Bairro Sousa Pinto, Coimbra 3000, Portugal (40.20690, -8.42115)



H Escadas Monumentais

Constructed in the 1950s, these 125 steps serve as a primary pedestrian link between the lower city, the Praça da República, and the upper university campus.

17 Rua de Oliveira Matos, Coimbra 3000305, Portugal (40.20813, -8.42185)



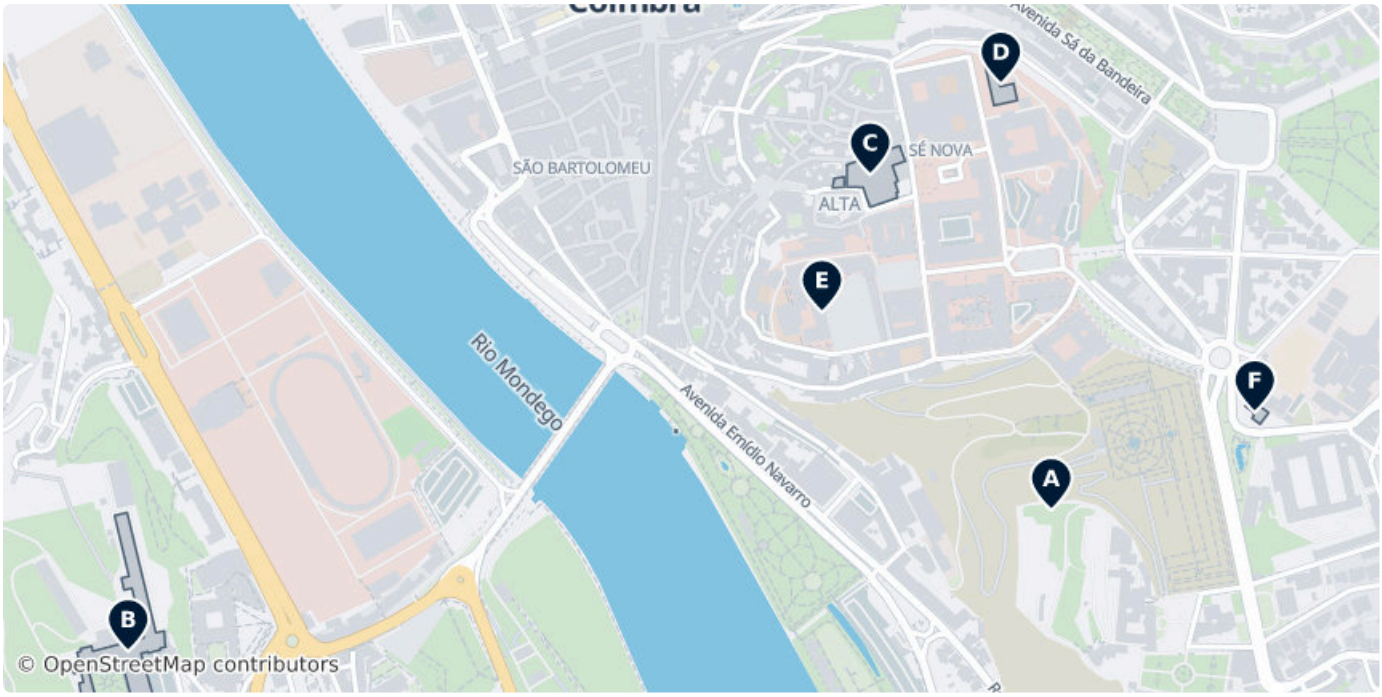
I Capela de São Miguel

A 16th-century chapel within the university complex, noted for its Manueline architecture, 18th-century azulejo tile panels, and a massive Baroque pipe organ decorated with gilded wood carvings.

14 Rua Doutor Guilherme Moreira, Coimbra 3000210, Portugal (40.20739, -8.42645)

Coimbra's Hidden Gems

Coimbra's lesser-known sites include the 18th-century Botanical Garden and the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova, which houses the silver tomb of Queen Saint Isabel. The National Museum Machado de Castro sits atop an ancient Roman cryptoporticus, while the Science Museum displays historical scientific collections. Architectural highlights include the 16th-century Manueline-style Capela de São Miguel with its ornate Baroque organ and the Casa Museu Bissaya Barreto, a neoclassical residence showcasing Portuguese furniture, porcelain, and 18th-century art collections.





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Largo Dr. José Rodrigues, 3000-236 Coimbra, Portugal (40.20908, -8.42567)

Tu–Su 10:00–18:00

mnmachadodecastro.imc-ip.pt, +351 239 853 070



D Science Museum of the University of Coimbra

The Science Museum of the University of Coimbra gathers the historical scientific collections of several units of the University of Coimbra...

185 Rua Inacio Duarte, Coimbra 3000481, Portugal (40.21019, -8.42357)

Mo–Su 14:00–18:00

museudaciencia.org



E Capela de São Miguel

A 16th-century Manueline-style chapel located within the University of Coimbra. It features interior walls lined with 17th-century azulejo tiles and a distinctive 18th-century Baroque organ decorated with chinoiserie motifs.

14 Rua Doutor Guilherme Moreira, Coimbra 3000210, Portugal (40.20739, -8.42645)

F Casa Museu Bissaya Barreto

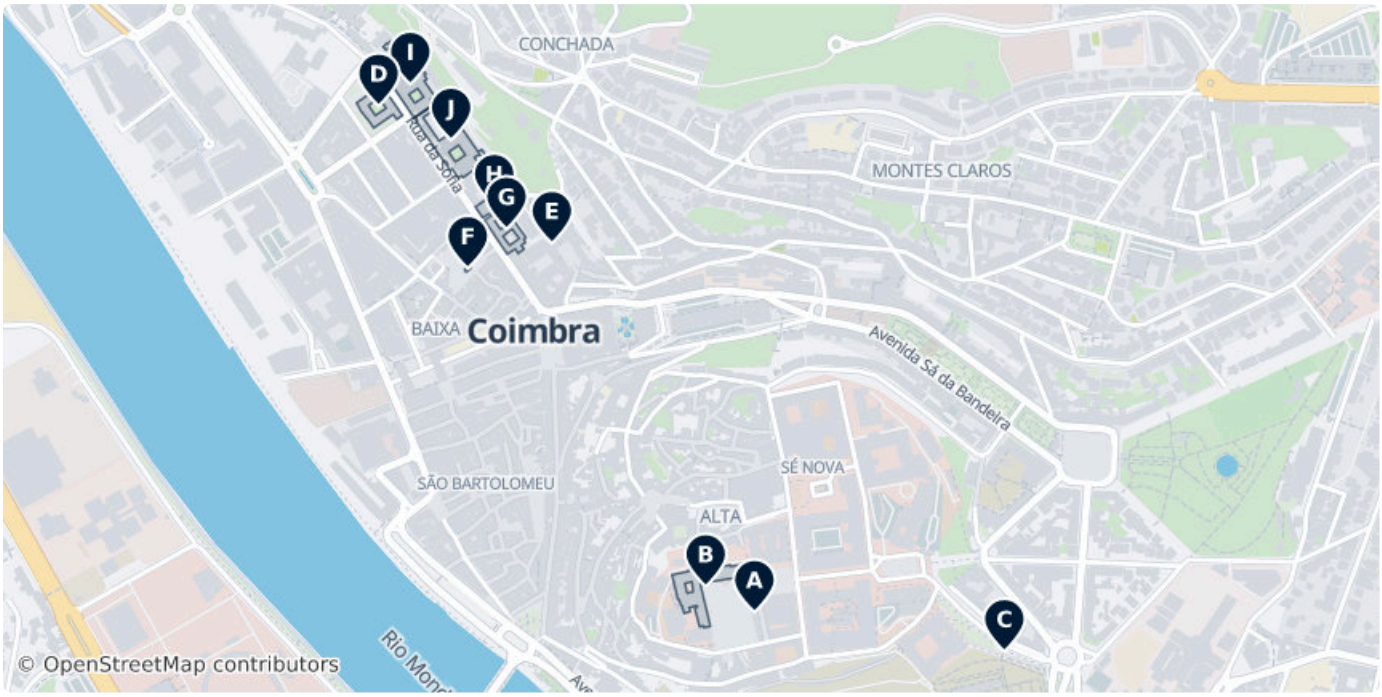
This neoclassical residence displays the private collections of Professor Bissaya Barreto. The museum features 18th-century Portuguese furniture, Chinese porcelain, and artistic tiles, set within a garden containing sculptures and traditional fountains.

Rua da Infantaria 23, 3000-219 Coimbra (40.20616, -8.41949)

fbb.pt, +351 239 853800

University of Coimbra Heritage

Established in 1290, the University of Coimbra is one of the oldest continuously operating universities in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site. This list highlights its architectural evolution across the Alta and Sofia districts, featuring Mannerist and Baroque colleges, the 16th-century Aqueduto de São Sebastião, and the Faculty of Law. These landmarks illustrate the university's role in shaping Portuguese higher education and its influence on the urban development of Coimbra through centuries of academic tradition.





A University of Coimbra

The University of Coimbra is a public research university in Coimbra, Portugal.

14 Rua José Falcão, Coimbra 3000233, Portugal
(40.20743, -8.42557)



B Faculty of Law

The University of Coimbra is a public research university in Coimbra, Portugal.

Pátio das Escolas, 3000-402 Coimbra, Portugal
(40.20777, -8.42642)

uc.pt/fduc, +351 239 859801



C Aqueduto de São Sebastião

A 16th-century aqueduct built atop Roman foundations, featuring 21 stone arches that historically supplied water to the University and the upper city.

31 Bairro Sousa Pinto, Coimbra 3000, Portugal
(40.20690, -8.42115)

D Palácio da Justiça

A mid-20th-century judicial building designed in the Portuguese Soft Modern style, situated within the UNESCO World Heritage buffer zone.

12 Rua Doutora Rosa Falcão, Coimbra 3000348, Portugal
(40.21425, -8.43220)

E Antigo Colégio das Artes - Inquisição

Established in 1548 by King João III for the study of liberal arts, this Renaissance building later functioned as the seat of the Inquisition.

(40.21240, -8.42914)

F Antiga Igreja de Santa Justa

A former academic college and church that characterizes the 16th-century expansion of the university into the Rua da Sofia district.

(40.21206, -8.43063)

G Colégio de São Bernardo

A 16th-century Cistercian college that formed part of the historic Sofia educational hub, showcasing Mannerist architectural elements.

96 Rua de Sofia, Coimbra 3000389, Portugal
(40.21259, -8.42994)

H Igreja da Nossa Senhora do Carmo

A Carmelite college founded in 1540, notable for its Mannerist church and its role in the early development of the city's academic quarter.

Coimbra (40.21290, -8.43016)

I Colégio de São Pedro dos Terceiros

Founded in the 16th century by the Third Order of Saint Francis, this former college is part of the ensemble of religious schools in the Sofia area.

150 Rua de Sofia, Coimbra 3000389, Portugal
(40.21454, -8.43164)



J Igreja da Graça

Igreja da Graça is a church in Portugal. It is classified as a National Monument.

141 Rua de Sofia, Coimbra 3000390, Portugal
(40.21379, -8.43092)

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