

Marvão

Portalegre District · Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Marvão is a small walled village on a high rocky crag in the Serra de São Mamede, close to the Spanish border. The houses stand inside medieval walls, and the views reach far over the plains and into Spain.

The village is quiet and compact. It suits a slow trip of one or two nights, with walking, birdwatching and local history. The streets are steep and cobbled, and most visitors leave their cars outside the gate.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are the best seasons for walking. Days are mild, and the chestnut woods change colour in autumn. Summers are hot and dry, so walk early or late in the day. Winters are cold and wet, and the village is windy.

The Marvão International Music Festival is the best-known event of the year. It is a classical music festival held in summer, usually from late July into early August. Concerts take place in the castle, in village churches and at the Roman ruins of Ammaia.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 13° Feels like 4°	0° / -6°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for hiking	11° / 15° Feels like 6°	0° / -5°	Dry air
March	Good Good for hiking	13° / 18° Feels like 9°	2° / -3°	Dry air
April	Good Good for hiking	16° / 22° Feels like 12°	4° / 0°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 28° Feels like 17°	7° / 3°	Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 35°	11° / 6°	22 sunny days · Dry air · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	31° / 37° Feels like 28°	14° / 9°	28 sunny days · Dry air · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 6 days above 35°
August	Great Great for wildlife watching	32° / 37° Feels like 28°	14° / 10°	28 sunny days · Dry air · Up to 6 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 33°	12° / 8°	21 sunny days · Dry air
October	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 28° Feels like 17°	8° / 3°	Dry air
November	Fair Fair for hiking	13° / 18° Feels like 9°	3° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 13° Feels like 5°	1° / -5°	Dry air

Best months: May, June, July, September

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

Top sights



- A Castelo de Marvão is the reason to come. The fortress began as a Moorish stronghold and grew over many centuries. You can walk the walls, see the large cistern and enjoy views in every direction.
- B Igreja de Santiago stands at the foot of the castle. It is in the village, below the castle walls.
- C Museu Municipal de Marvão is in the former Santa Maria church. It shows Roman finds, pottery, religious art and traditional costumes.
- D Convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela is a church and convent a short walk from the village centre. The marked PR1 walking trail passes it.
- E Cidade Romana de Ammaia is the ruined Roman city about 7 km south of the village. You can walk to the forum and the baths, where some columns still stand.
- F Museu de Ammaia is the site museum. It shows glass, coins, jewellery and inscribed stones from the excavations, and a short film introduces the city.
- G Torre da Portagem is the old tower beside the medieval bridge at Portagem, at the foot of the hill. The PR1 trail passes it near the start.

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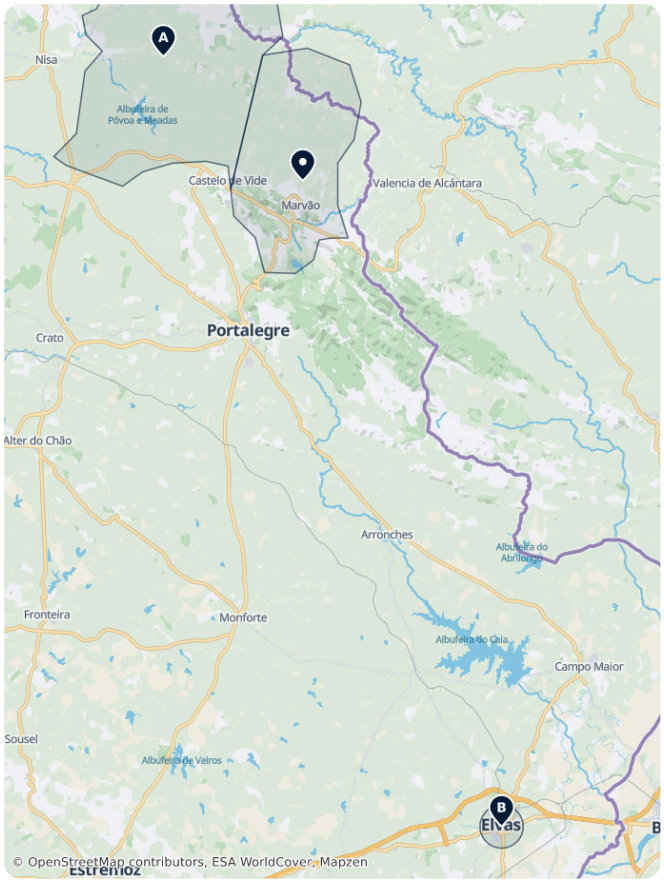
What to experience

- Watch for birds of prey from the castle. Griffon vultures, Bonelli's eagles and short-toed snake eagles are seen here. Spring is the best season.
- Walk the PR1 trail, a 7.7 km circular route from Portagem up to the village and back. It takes about 2 hours 45 minutes and passes cork oak and chestnut woods, an old mill and a medieval bridge.
- Walk the PR3 trail from Castelo de Vide to Marvão. It is 9.6 km on an old stone road through oak and chestnut forest, and the last 3 km are a steady climb.
- Go to a concert in summer during the music festival. Venues include the castle, village churches and the Roman ruins.
- Visit the Chestnut Fair in November. Producers from the area sell chestnuts and local food.

Day trips

Marvão sits close to several small towns and one major World Heritage city. Roads are quiet, and a car makes these trips much easier.

- A Castelo de Vide: a short drive west. It has a hilltop castle and a medieval Jewish quarter with a 14th-century synagogue.
- Valencia de Alcántara: just across the border in Spain. It is a town with Roman remains and many nearby dolmens.
- Portalegre: about 20 km south. It is the district capital, with the nearest train station.
- B Elvas: about 1 hour 20 minutes by car. Its large bastioned fortifications and long aqueduct are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Where to explore

- For a nearby hilltop town: Castelo de Vide.
- For a bigger trip east: Elvas.

Getting there

- By air: Lisbon (LIS) is the main gateway, about 230 km away. Most visitors rent a car at the airport. The drive takes roughly 2.5 to 3 hours.
- By train: Marvão has no railway station. The nearest is in Portalegre, about 20 km south, with a few daily trains towards Entroncamento and Lisbon. A taxi or bus continues to Marvão. Check timetables at CP Comboios de Portugal.
- By bus: Long-distance coaches run from Lisbon (Sete Rios) to Portalegre and, on some departures, to Marvão. Journeys are long, and few buses run each day. Local buses link Portalegre, Castelo de Vide and Marvão.
- By car: The road up to the village is the N359 from Portagem. A small road also runs from Castelo de Vide. See the municipal site for visitor information: Marvão municipality.

Getting around

- On foot: The village is small and best explored on foot. Lanes are steep and cobbled, so wear good shoes.
- Beyond the village: Portagem, Ammaia and the trails below the hill are too far to walk easily with luggage. Use a car, a taxi or the marked trails.
- Public transport: There is little local public transport. A rental car is the practical choice.
- Cycling: The hill is steep, so cycling is only for fit riders.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The village is small and walkable, but the lanes are steep and cobbled.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

The hill is steep and the roads have little cycling infrastructure.

Driving

- Is a car worth it? Yes. Public transport is limited, and a car lets you reach Ammaia, the trails and nearby towns.
- Parking: Park in the large car park near the village gate. Parking inside the walls is very limited, and the lanes are narrow. Do not drive in unless you are staying overnight.
- Busy days: During the Chestnut Fair in November, parking fills early, so arrive in the morning.

Food & drink

Food here is Alentejo country cooking, with a lot of pork and hearty dishes. Try carne de porco à alentejana, pork cooked with clams. Chestnuts are the local speciality, and the woods around Marvão produce a chestnut with protected origin status. Look for them in autumn.

Restaurants cluster around Praça do Pelourinho in the village, and at Portagem at the foot of the hill. Most serve similar regional dishes, so choose by menu and setting.

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

Marvão is very safe for visitors. Crime is rare.

- The lanes and castle walls are steep and uneven. Wear shoes with good grip.
- Summer afternoons are hot. Walk early, carry water and use sun protection.
- Trails have steep climbs. Check the weather and daylight before you start.

History

People have used the rocks of Marvão as a refuge since Roman times. The nearby Roman city of Cidade Romana de Ammaia was an important town in the 1st century AD, and its forum and baths are still visible.

The name comes from Ibn Marwan, a rebel who sheltered in the fortress in the 9th century. Portuguese forces under *Afonso Henriques* took it from the Moors in the 1160s. In 1226 King *Sancho II* gave the village its charter.

King *Dinis* strengthened Castelo de Marvão at the end of the 13th century. It became a key fortress in the wars with Castile, and the border is still very near. More gates were added in the 17th century, during the Restoration wars. You can still see these gates today when you walk the walls.

Roman finds and local history are on show in Museu Municipal de Marvão.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



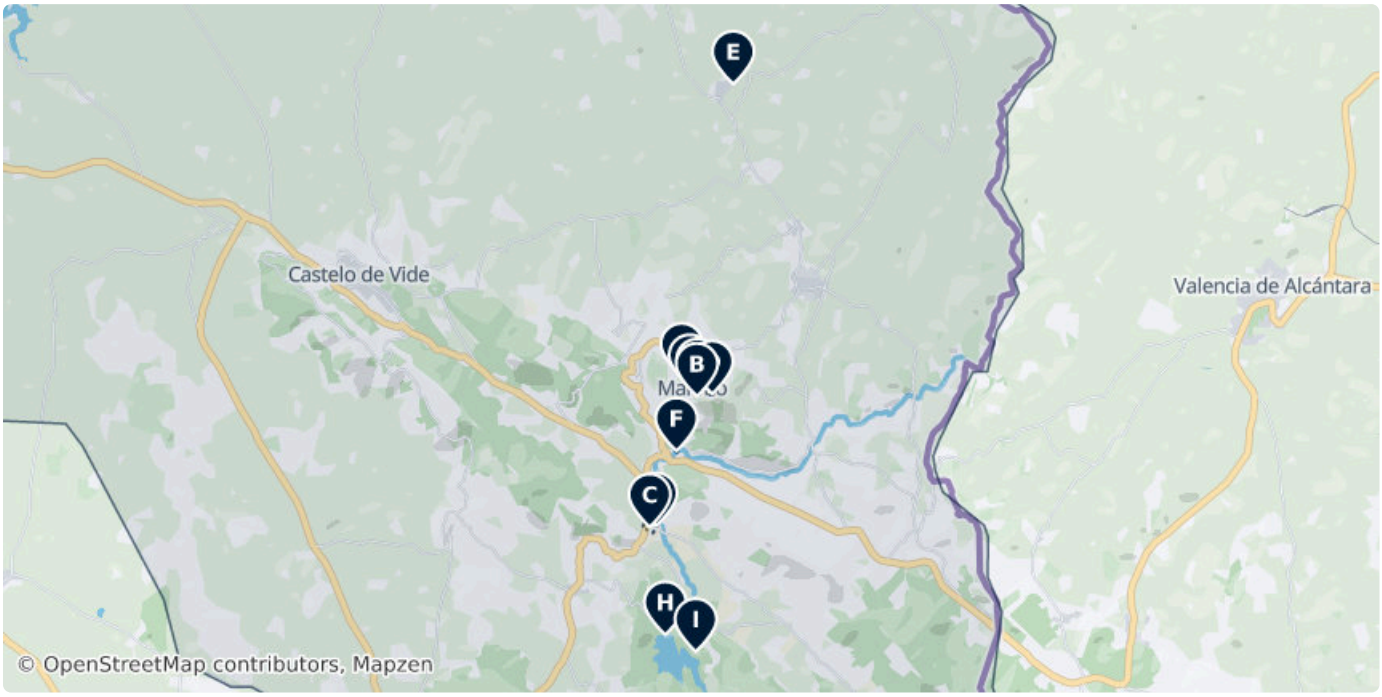
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Marvão Essentials

Perched on a granite crag 862 meters high, Marvão is a fortified medieval village within the São Mamede Natural Park. This selection covers the 13th-century castle and the village's religious heritage, including the Gothic Igreja de Santiago and the former Santa Maria Church. Beyond the walls, explore the extensive Roman ruins of Ammaia and its museum, the historic Portagem bridge, and the Apartadura Dam. The surrounding protected landscape offers diverse hiking trails and unique geological formations near the Spanish border.





A Castle of Marvão

The Castle of Marvão is a well-preserved medieval castle located in the civil parish of Santa Maria de Marvão, in the municipality of...

7330, Portugal (39.39711, -7.38000)

B Igreja de Santiago

A Gothic church located within the village walls, featuring a simple granite portal and traditional Alentejo architectural elements.

11 Rua de Santiago, Marvão 7330112, Portugal (39.39349, -7.37646)



C Roman villa of Ammaia

The Roman ruins of Ammaia are located in Portugal within the Nature Park of the Serra de São Mamede, a mountainous expanse of forest in the...

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.36992, -7.38747)

ammaia.pt

D Convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela

A 15th-century Franciscan monastery situated just outside the village fortifications, notable for its marble portal and quiet cloister.

(39.39394, -7.37290)

E Bike Rail Marvão

A tourist activity utilizing pedal-powered carts on a decommissioned section of the Beira Baixa railway line through the São Mamede mountains.

Estação Ferroviária Beirã-Marvão Cais Coberto – Largo da Estação 7330-012 Beirã, Marvão (39.44975, -7.36798)

railbikemarvao.com, +351 912 987 639

F Rua Ponte Romana

A historic bridge over the Sever River featuring four arches. While largely medieval in construction, it sits on Roman foundations near an ancient toll station.

(39.38363, -7.38125)



G Roman villa of Ammaia

The Roman ruins of Ammaia are located in Portugal within the Nature Park of the Serra de São Mamede, a mountainous expanse of forest in the...

Estrada da Calçadinha, 7330 São Salvador Da Aramenha (39.37014, -7.38593)



H Barragem da Apartadura

An embankment dam on the Ribeira de Sever that provides water to the region and serves as a scenic point for birdwatching.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.35049, -7.38385)

I Site of Community Importance São Mamede

A protected mountainous area characterized by cork oak forests, chestnut trees, and high biodiversity at the transition between Atlantic and Mediterranean climates.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.34744, -7.37672)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx

J Museu Municipal de Marvão

Housed in the former 14th-century Santa Maria Church, this museum displays archaeological finds ranging from the Neolithic period to the Roman era.

13 Rua do Castelo, Marvão 7330114, Portugal (39.39505, -7.37809)

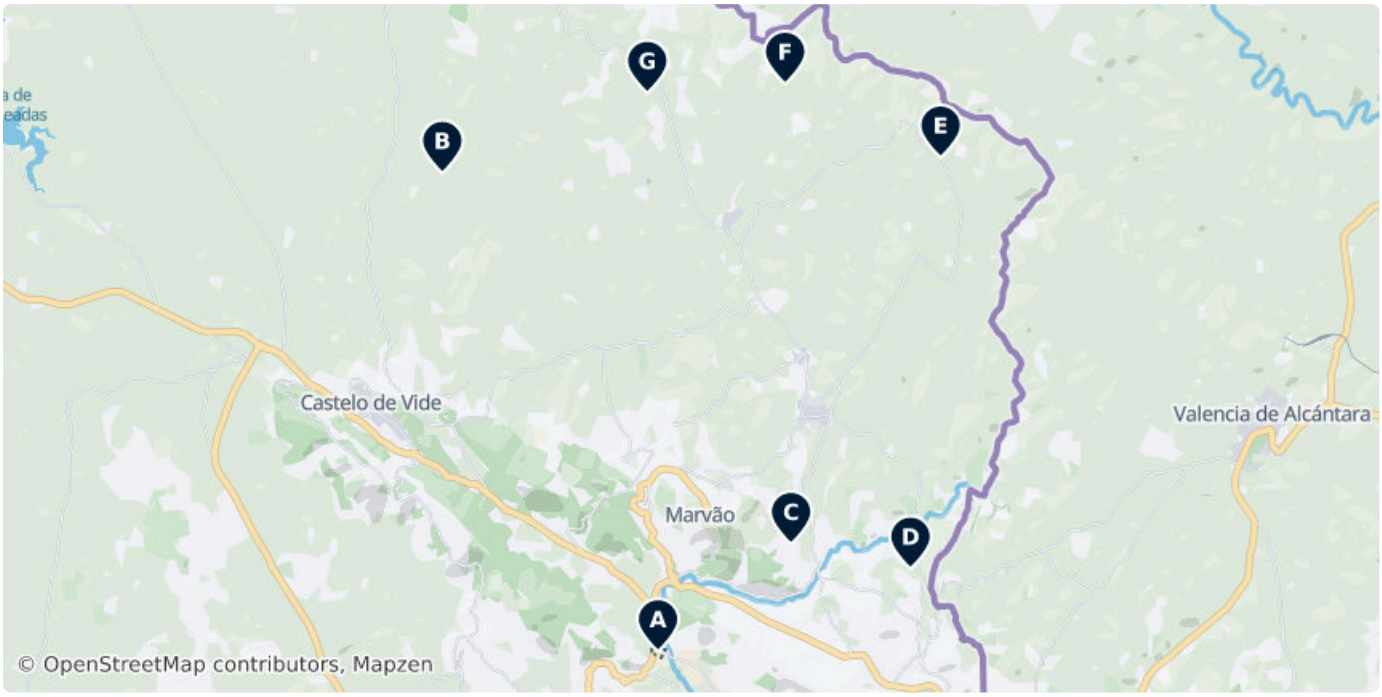
K Marvão

A dramatic quartz-diorite escarpment rising nearly 900 meters, offering natural defensive barriers and panoramic views across the Alentejo and into Spain.

(39.39429, -7.37634)

Archaeological Sites

The Serra de São Mamede Natural Park contains a high concentration of ancient sites spanning from the Neolithic period to the Roman era. This collection features the well-preserved Roman city of Ammaia, known for its forum and baths, alongside several megalithic monuments including the Anta da Casa dos Galhardos and the Menir do Corregedor. These sites, which include Iron Age fortifications like Castro da Crença and ancient necropolises, provide a comprehensive look at the historical settlement and defensive structures of the Alentejo region.





A Roman villa of Ammaia

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(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.36992, -7.38747)

ammaia.pt

B Anta da Casa dos Galhardos

Megalithic dolmen located approximately 150 meters southwest of the Galhardos farmstead. It features a large stone chamber typical of the prehistoric burial structures found throughout the Alentejo region.

(Unnamed Road), 7320, Portugal (39.45738, -7.43854)

C Pasmal

Archaeological site containing an ancient necropolis.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.38955, -7.35594)

D Castro da Crença

Remains of a fortified hilltop settlement, or castro, dating back to the Iron Age.

(39.38505, -7.32766)

E Anta da Granja

A prehistoric megalithic burial chamber, or dolmen, characteristic of the Neolithic period in the Serra de São Mamede.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.46018, -7.32053)

arqueologia.patrimoniocultural.pt

F Anta da Cabeçuda

Megalithic burial monument consisting of a stone chamber.

7330, Portugal (39.47367, -7.35735)

arqueologia.patrimoniocultural.pt

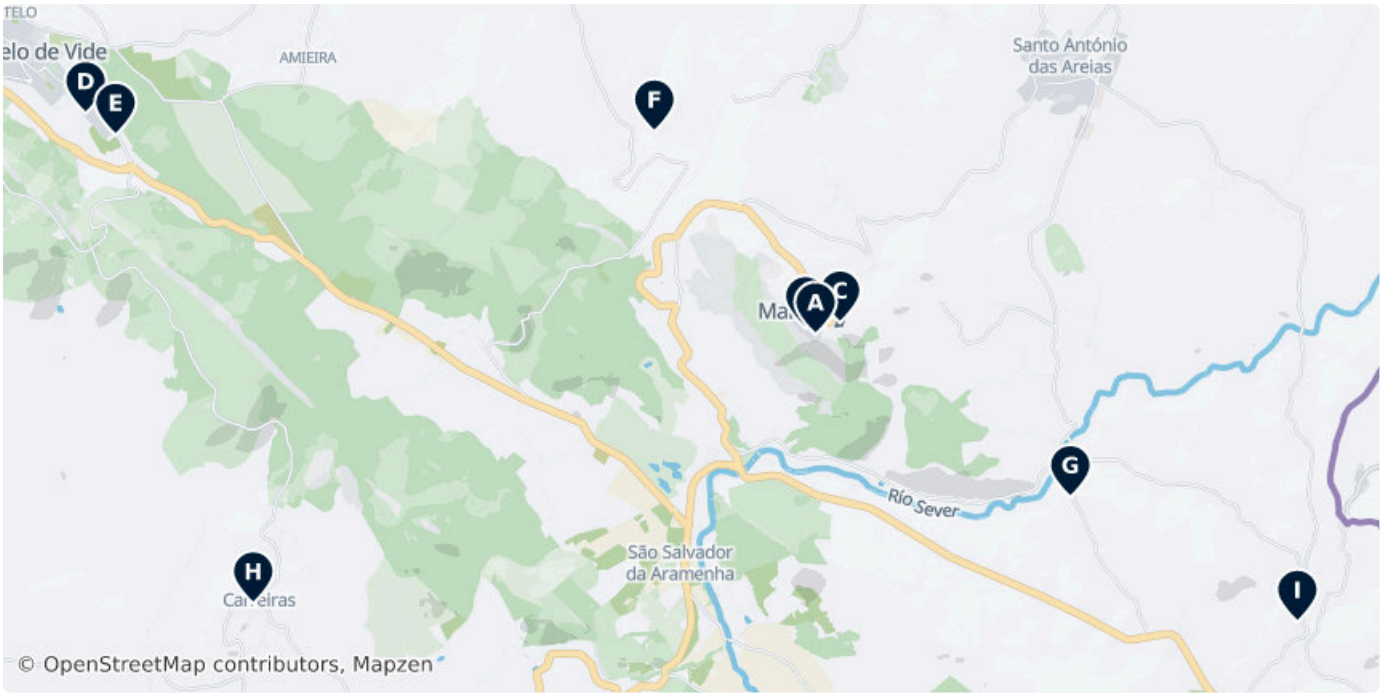
G Menir do Corregedor

A prehistoric standing stone, or menhir, dating from the megalithic period.

(39.47200, -7.39000)

Religious Heritage of Marvão

Marvão's religious heritage reflects its medieval roots and defensive history. This collection spans from the 14th-century Gothic foundations of the Igreja de Santiago to the 15th-century Convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela, known for its Manueline architectural details. These sites, located within the walled village and throughout the surrounding rural parishes like Porto da Espada and Carreiras, showcase Alentejo's traditional ecclesiastical architecture, including white-washed facades and regional marble accents.



A Igreja do Calvário

Small church located near the village entrance, traditionally marking a station in the Way of the Cross.

1 Rua do Calvairio, Marvão 7330153, Portugal (39.39299, -7.37541)

B Igreja de Santiago

The oldest parish church in Marvão, originally built in the 14th century. It features a Gothic portal and a simple, vaulted interior.

11 Rua de Santiago, Marvão 7330112, Portugal (39.39349, -7.37646)

C Convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela

Founded in 1448, this former Franciscan monastery features a Manueline-style main portal and a marble pulpit. It serves as a prominent landmark at the entrance of the village.

(39.39394, -7.37290)

D Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios

Parish church located in Porto da Espada, serving the local rural community.

1 Rua Francisco Bogalho, Castelo de Vide 7320102, Portugal (39.41043, -7.44996)

E Igreja de São Vicente Ferrer

Village church in Porto da Espada, dedicated to the Dominican friar and preacher.

83 Rua da Banda da União Artística, Castelo de Vide 7320102, Portugal (39.40873, -7.44690)

F Igreja Vale de Ródão

Rural religious site serving the community of Vale de Ródão within the Marvão municipality.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.40899, -7.39188)

G Capela Nossa Senhora Barros Cardos

Small rural chapel located south of the main village of Marvão.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.38015, -7.34939)

H Igreja de Carreiras

The main parish church of Carreiras village, characterized by its traditional Alentejo white-washed architecture.

17 Largo do Rossio, Carreiras 7300355, Portugal (39.37178, -7.43285)

I Igreja de São Sebastião

Located in the parish of São Salvador, this church is dedicated to the saint traditionally invoked for protection against disease.

(Unnamed Road), 7330, Portugal (39.37032, -7.32621)

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