

Tomar

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Tomar is a small town on the Nabão river in central Portugal. It was the seat of the Knights Templar in Portugal, and later of the Order of Christ. Their castle and convent on the hill are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the reason most people come.

The old centre is compact and easy to walk. It has a medieval synagogue, a few quiet churches and river gardens. Tomar suits a relaxed one- or two-night stay, and it works well between Lisbon and Coimbra.

When to visit

April, May and October are the most comfortable months for walking and sightseeing. July and August are hot and dry, so visit the convent early in the day. Autumn and winter bring the most rain, but the sights are quiet then.

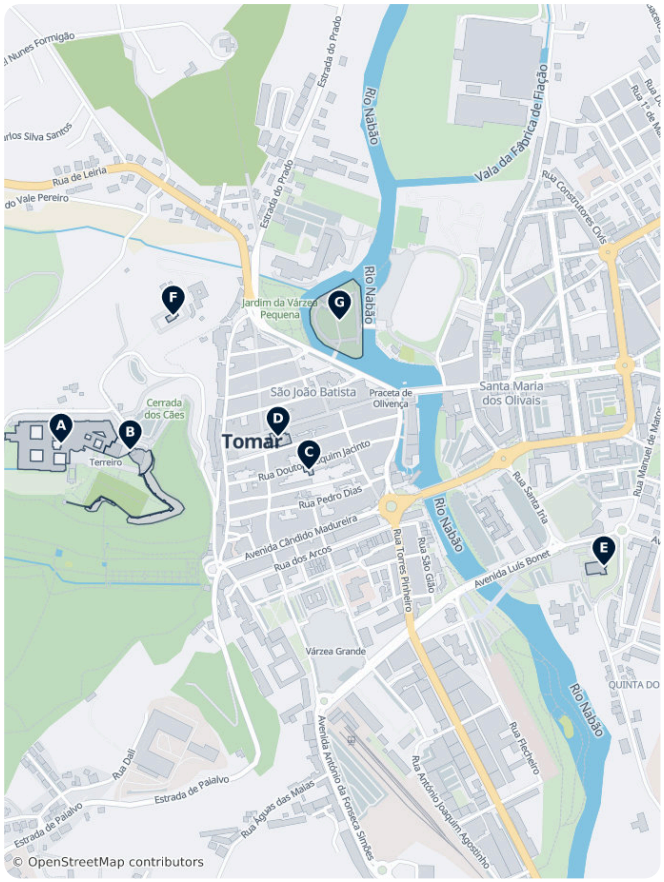
The biggest event is the Festa dos Tabuleiros. It takes place every four years in July, and the next edition is in 2027. Girls in white carry tall towers of decorated bread through streets covered in paper flowers. Book rooms well ahead if you plan to attend.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for hiking	15° / 19° Feels like 11°	5° / 0°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	17° / 21° Feels like 13°	6° / 0°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	19° / 25° Feels like 16°	8° / 3°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	10° / 6°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	12° / 7°	Dry air
June	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 37°	15° / 11°	Up to 5 days above 35°
July	Fair Fair for sightseeing	33° / 40°	17° / 13°	25 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 11 days above 35°
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	34° / 40°	17° / 14°	26 sunny days · Up to 13 days above 35°
September	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 37°	16° / 12°	20 sunny days · Up to 5 days above 35°
October	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	13° / 9°	Dry air
November	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 24°	8° / 3°	12 rainy days · Dry air
December	Good Good for hiking	15° / 19° Feels like 12°	6° / 0°	12 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: April, May, October

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

Top sights



- A Convento de Cristo is the main reason to visit. Templars founded it in the 12th century, and its round church is modelled on buildings in Jerusalem. The Manueline chapter house window is one of Portugal's best-known carvings.
- B Castelo de Tomar is the Templar fortress on the same hill. It is part of the convent visit, and its walls give views over the town.
- C Sinagoga de Tomar is a 15th-century synagogue. It now holds a small museum about the town's Jewish history.
- D Igreja de São João Baptista stands on the main square, Praça da República. It is a good start for a walk around the old centre.
- E Igreja de Santa Maria dos Olivais is a Templar church from the 12th century. It holds the tomb slab of *Gualdim Pais*, who founded the town's castle.
- F Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Conceição is a small Renaissance chapel on the path up to the convent. It was planned in the 16th century as a royal tomb.
- G Parque do Mouchão is a park on an island in the Nabão river. It is a good place for a break after the convent.

Tickets for the convent cost €15. It is open 9:00 to 17:30 from October to May and 9:00 to 18:30 from June to September. The last entry is 30 minutes before closing. It is closed on 1 January, 1 March, Easter Sunday, 1 May, and 24 and 25 December. Buy tickets online at Museus e Monumentos de Portugal.

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What to experience

- Festa dos Tabuleiros: Every four years in July (next in 2027). Residents decorate the old town with paper flowers. Girls carry towers of 30 decorated loaves in a parade to the main square. See Turismo Tomar for the programme.
- Climb to the Nossa Senhora da Piedade chapel: A staircase of 292 steps leads to a hilltop chapel with a view over the town and the convent. The chapel is closed on Mondays.
- Walk along the Nabão river: The riverside gardens link the old centre with Parque do Mouchão.

Day trips

Tomar sits in the middle of Portugal, so several big sights are within an hour by car.

- Almourol Castle, about 25 minutes by car. A Templar castle on a small island in the Tagus river. You reach it by a short boat ride from the river bank, so check boat times before you go.
- A Nossa Senhora de Fátima, about 30 minutes by car. A major Catholic pilgrimage site. A bus also runs from Tomar bus station.
- B Batalha, about 40 minutes by car. Its Gothic monastery is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, built after the 1385 Battle of Aljubarrota.
- C Coimbra, about 1 hour by car. A university city with a historic old town on a hill.



Where to explore

Tomar fits well on a route between two larger cities.

- Lisbon is the main arrival point, about 1.5 hours away by car or about 2 hours by train.
- Coimbra lies about 1 hour north by car.
- Leiria and Alcobaça are options for a trip towards the Atlantic coast.

Getting there

- By air: Lisbon airport (LIS) is the main gateway. Take the metro to Oriente station, then a train or coach to Tomar.
- By train: Regional trains run from Lisboa Oriente to Tomar in about 2 hours. Tomar station is the end of a short branch line. Book on CP Comboios de Portugal.
- By bus: Rede Expressos coaches run from Lisbon (Sete Rios) in about 1 hour 45 minutes. Other routes link Tomar with Coimbra (about 2 hours), Fátima and Leiria. The bus station is next to the train station.
- By car: About 1.5 hours from Lisbon and about 1 hour from Coimbra.

Getting around

- On foot: The old centre, the river and the path up to the convent are all walkable. The convent is about 10 minutes uphill from the main square. The train and bus stations are about a 10-15 minute walk from the centre.
- Local buses: Rodotejo runs the urban lines, including two circular routes (Linha Azul and Linha Verde) from the bus station. Buy tickets in advance or with the Moov-U app, and validate at the start of the trip. See Rodotejo for lines and fares.
- Cycling: Flat along the river, hilly elsewhere.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old centre is compact and flat near the river. The convent is a short uphill walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling is easy along the river but the hills around the convent are steep.

Driving

- Is a car worth it?: No, for the town itself. It is compact and easy on foot. A car helps for Almourol, Fátima and Batalha.
- Parking: Paid street parking is available near the convent at Terreiro de Gualdim Pais.
- Tolls: Part of the road from Lisbon uses the A1, which has tolls. Check current toll prices before you travel. The ex-SCUT motorways elsewhere in Portugal are toll-free since 1 January 2025.

Food & drink

Tomar is known for convent sweets. *Fatias de Tomar* are egg-yolk slices first made at the Convent of Christ. *Beija-me depressa* ("kiss me quickly") is a small almond sweet. The pastry shop Estrelas de Tomar is a local favourite.

For lunch or dinner, look along the streets around Praça da República and the main street towards the convent. Tavernas in the old centre serve small plates (*petiscos*) at low prices.

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

Tomar is a calm, safe town. As anywhere, keep an eye on your bags in crowds, especially during the Festa dos Tabuleiros.

Tap water is safe to drink. In summer, forest fires are a risk across central Portugal. Follow local warnings if you plan to hike in the hills.

Emergency number: 112.

History

The land around Tomar was given to the Knights Templar in 1159. In 1160, *Gualdim Pais*, the Templar master in Portugal, laid the first stone of the castle and convent. His tomb slab is in Igreja de Santa Maria dos Olivais.

In the early 14th century the Templars were dissolved. King Denis created the Order of Christ in 1319 and kept their property in Portugal. Its seat moved to Tomar in 1357. *Henry the Navigator* led the order from 1420 to 1460, and it supported the voyages of discovery.

King Manuel I paid for the Manueline decoration of the convent from 1499. In 1581, Portuguese nobles met in the convent and recognised Philip II of Spain as king. UNESCO listed the site in 1983.

Tomar had a Jewish community in the Middle Ages, and Jewish refugees from Spain arrived after 1492. The 15th-century synagogue, Sinagoga de Tomar, still stands. It was closed in 1496.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



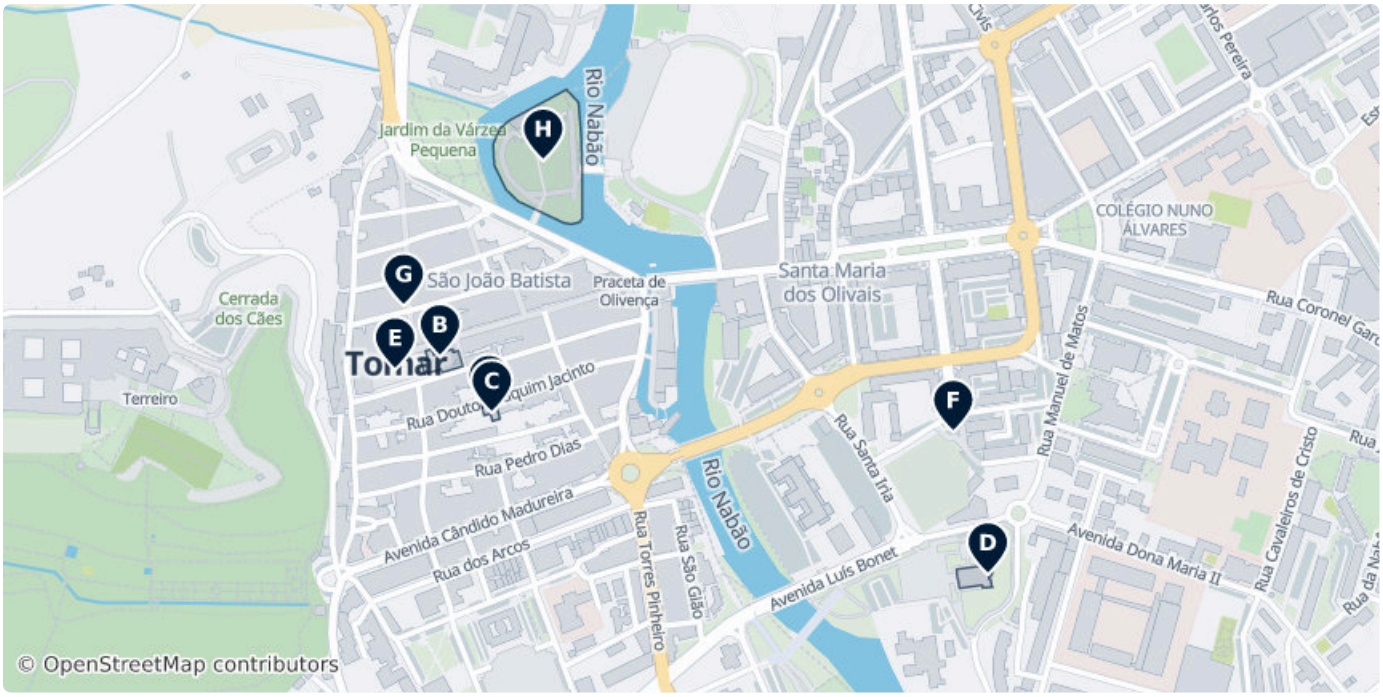
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LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Tomar's Essential Heritage

Tomar’s historical center preserves centuries of religious and civic architecture, spanning from Roman foundations to the legacy of the Knights Templar. This list highlights key sites including the 15th-century Synagogue of Tomar, the Manueline-style Church of St. John the Baptist, and the Church of Santa Maria do Olival, the former pantheon of the Templar Masters. Visitors can explore the city’s Roman roots at the forum, visit the monument to city founder Gualdim Pais, or see the traditional wooden waterwheel in Mouchão Park.



A Museu Luso-Hebraico Abraham Zacut

Housed within a 15th-century synagogue, this museum displays Jewish religious objects and archaeological artifacts. It is named after the renowned Jewish astronomer and mathematician who served the Portuguese crown.

(39.60323, -8.41380)



B Church of St. John the Baptist

The Church of Saint John the Baptist is a 15th-century Catholic church in Tomar, Portugal that was built by King Manuel I and is of...

125 Rua de São João, Tomar 2300568, Portugal
(39.60375, -8.41446)



C Synagogue of Tomar

The Synagogue of Tomar is a well-preserved medieval synagogue in Tomar, Portugal.

69 Rua Doutor Joaquim Jacinto, Tomar 2300577, Portugal
(39.60317, -8.41376)

cm-tomar.pt/index.php/sinagoga



D Church of Santa Maria do Olival

The Church of Santa Maria do Olival is a Roman Catholic church in the city of Tomar, in Portugal.

Rua de Manuel Matos, Tomar 2300508, Portugal
(39.60150, -8.40712)



E Estátua de Dom Gualdim Pais

Located in the Praça da República, this bronze monument honors the 12th-century Grand Master of the Knights Templar and founder of Tomar. The statue stands at the center of the city's historic main square.

41 Rua Serpa Pinto, Tomar 2300592, Portugal
(39.60361, -8.41506)

F Fórum romano de Tomar

Archaeological remains of the Roman city of Sellium, featuring foundations of the forum and residential structures dating back to the 1st century AD.

(39.60297, -8.40758)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

G Casa Manuel Guimarães

A historic residence in the city center featuring traditional Portuguese architectural elements, now serving as a cultural space and museum.

83 Rua de Silva Magalhães, Tomar 2300593, Portugal
(39.60427, -8.41494)



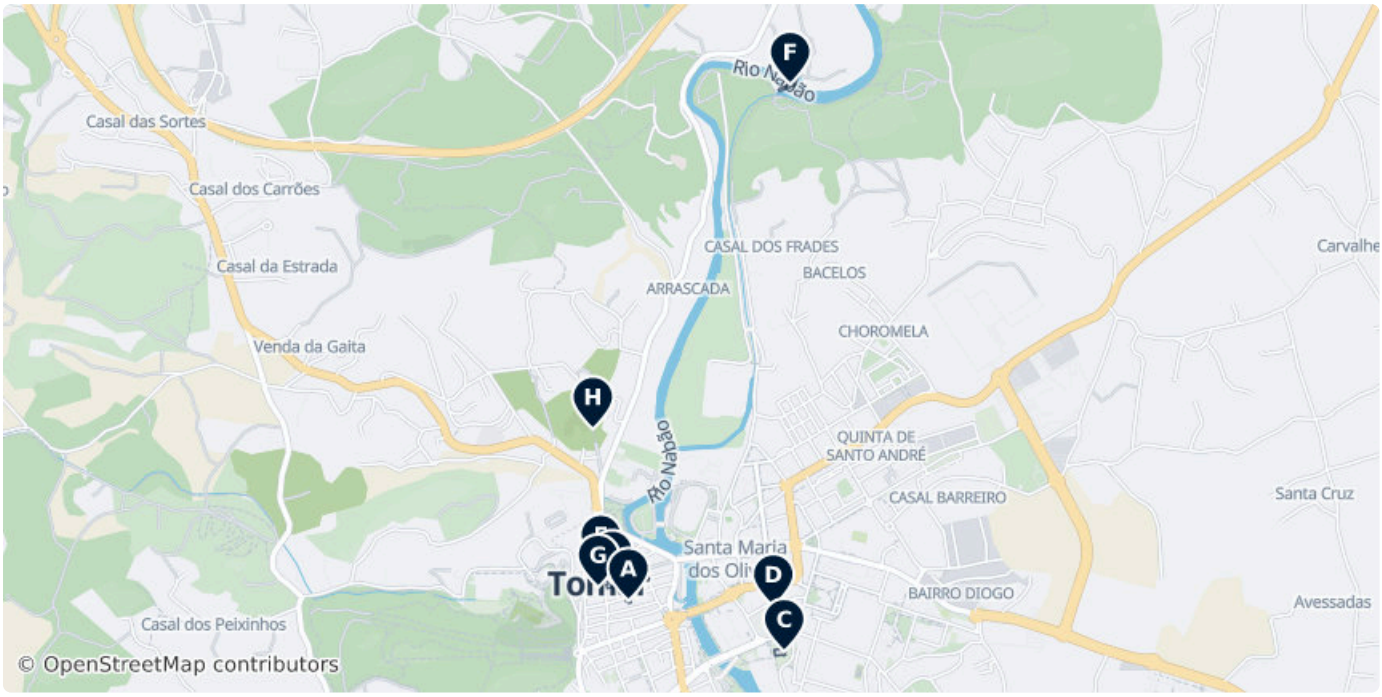
H Mouchão park

A riverside park located on an island in the Nabão River. It is best known for the Roda do Mouchão, a large traditional wooden waterwheel used for historical irrigation systems.

Parque do Mouchão, 2300-586 Tomar, Portugal
(39.60577, -8.41307)

Tomar Heritage Sites

Tomar's heritage spans from Roman foundations to the era of the Knights Templar. This collection features the 15th-century Manueline Church of Saint John the Baptist and the medieval Synagogue of Tomar, one of the best-preserved in Portugal. The list includes the Roman Forum ruins of ancient Sellium, the industrial dam of the city's historic spinning factory, and the monumental staircase of Nossa Senhora da Piedade. These sites highlight the architectural evolution of Tomar, from its Templar origins to its 19th-century industrial development.





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(39.60150, -8.40712)

D Fórum romano de Tomar

Archaeological remains of the Roman forum of Sellium, the ancient settlement that preceded the modern city of Tomar.

(39.60297, -8.40758)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

E Casa Manuel Guimarães

An 18th-century historic residence featuring traditional Portuguese architecture and period decorative elements.

83 Rua de Silva Magalhães, Tomar 2300593, Portugal
(39.60427, -8.41494)

F Açude da Fábrica de Fiação de Tomar

An industrial heritage site on the Nabão River, featuring a dam originally constructed to provide water power for the local spinning factory.

2300, Portugal (39.62014, -8.40687)



G Estátua de Dom Gualdim Pais

A monument in Praça da República dedicated to Gualdim Pais, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar who founded Tomar in 1160.

41 Rua Serpa Pinto, Tomar 2300592, Portugal
(39.60361, -8.41506)

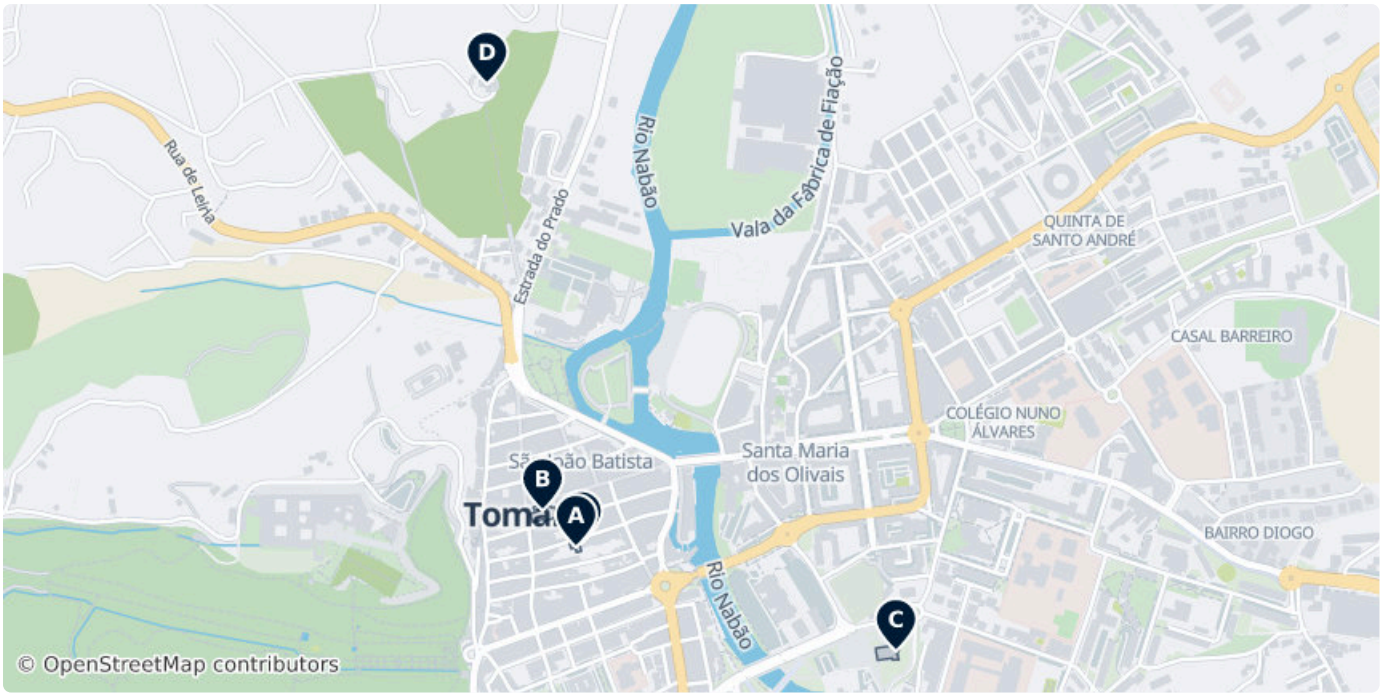
H Escadinhas da Nossa Senhora da Piedade

A monumental 19th-century staircase with approximately 300 steps leading to the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, offering elevated views of the city.

(39.60880, -8.41528)

Historic Religious Sites

Tomar's religious landscape reflects its history as a center of diverse faiths and the headquarters of the Knights Templar. This collection includes the 15th-century Church of Saint John the Baptist, commissioned by King Manuel I, and the Synagogue of Tomar, one of Portugal's best-preserved medieval Jewish houses of worship. The Church of Santa Maria do Olival served as a Templar funerary site, while the hilltop Capela de Nossa Senhora da Piedade provides views across the historic center.





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E Synagogue of Tomar - Portuguese-Jewish Museum

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65 Rua Doutor Joaquim Jacinto, Tomar 2300577, Portugal (39.60323, -8.41365)

D Capela de Nossa Senhora da Piedade

A 14th-century Roman Catholic chapel situated on a hill overlooking the city, accessible via a monumental staircase and offering panoramic views of Tomar.

3 Rua Conego Manuel Nunes Formigão, Tomar 2300, Portugal (39.61058, -8.41561)

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