

Porto Historical Walking Tour

Pedestrian route through the main monuments of the Historic Center of Porto, recognized as World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.



- 1. Mosteiro da Serra do Pilar:** Old monastery built in 1538-1630. During the Siege of Porto episode of the Portuguese Civil War (1832-33), it became a stronghold of the liberal troops.
- 2. Ponte Luís I:** A project of the Belgian engineer Théophile Seyrig, a disciple of Gustave Eiffel, this is magnificent 2 decks iron-bridge, dating from the 1880s. In 2003, the bridge underwent major rehabilitation works, with its upper deck becoming part of Metro do Porto light rail network.
- 3. Equestrian Statue of Vímara Peres:** Born in Galicia and vassal of Alfonso III of Asturias, Vímara Peres was responsible for the definitive conquest of the territory north of the Douro River from the Muslims, in 868.
- 4. Sé:** The cathedral was built in the 12th and 13th centuries, in Romanesque style, but had many

additions over the following centuries. In this cathedral, King John I of Portugal married the English princess Philippa of Lancaster in 1387, sealing the alliance between the two countries. The cathedral exterior was greatly modified in the Baroque era, namely by Italian architect Niccoló Nasoni's loggia, at the north façade.

5. **Memorial Stone for the Conquest of Lisbon:** In 1147, during the stopover of a Second Crusade fleet sailing from Northern Europe to the Holy Land, the bishop of Porto managed to convince the crusaders to help Afonso Henriques, the 1st king of Portugal, to conquer the city of Lisbon, then part of the Muslim Almoravid Empire. A century later, Lisbon became the capital city of Portugal.
6. **Casa do Cabido:** Next to the Cathedral, the Chapter House is a 3-story building from early 18th century. The 2nd floor now holds the Cathedral's Treasury. The capillary room is on the upper floor, where the cathedral chapter used to meet.
7. **Paço Episcopal:** The current baroque style Bishop's Palace was built on the site of an older medieval palace. The elegant grandeur of the façade reflects the influence of Nasoni.
8. **Estação de São Bento:** The railway station opened in 1896, but the current building, a project by local architect Marques da Silva, was only inaugurated in 1916. The magnificent *azulejos* (tile panels) inside São Bento railway station led many to consider it as one of the most beautiful in the world. This was formerly the site of the Saint Benedict of Hail Mary Monastery, erected in the early 16th century.
9. **Equestrian Statue of Pedro IV:** The statue of the liberal Pedro in Praça da Liberdade (Liberty Square) was designed by the French sculptor Célestin Anatole Calmels. The bronze statue shows King Pedro IV of Portugal – who was also Pedro I of Brazil – holding the Constitutional Charter of 1826.
10. **Clérigos Church and Tower:** Construction began in 1732 by a brotherhood devoted to help clergymen in need. The 75-meters-high bell tower, concluded in 1763, was the tallest building in Portugal at the time. The Italian architect Nasoni, the author of the whole project, was buried in the church, in an unmarked location.
11. **Livraria Lello:** Lello Bookstore's neo-Gothic façade, iconic red staircase, stained glass, and the bookshelves full of books attracts thousands and thousands of visitors from all over the world. Expect to wait in a long line, if you consider visiting the place.
12. **Rua das Flores:** Opened 500 years ago, Flowers Street is one of Porto's most relevant historical streets, a traditional address of goldsmiths and merchant bourgeoisie. Some of the most noble houses have been adapted into restaurants and charming hotels. The Baroque façade of the Misericórdia Church by Nasoni stands out.
13. **Palácio da Bolsa:** The Stock Exchange Palace was built on the site of the St. Francis convent, destroyed in 1833 during the Siege of Porto. Currently, it is one of the most visited monuments in Porto. Its Arab Room, with gold-plated stuccoes filling the walls and ceiling, is quite stunning.
14. **São Francisco Church:** The St. Francis Church is the best example of Gothic architecture in Porto. It dates to the 14th century, as part of the Franciscan convent. However, it is better known for the notable 18th-century Baroque gilded woodcarving ensemble.
15. **Feitoria Inglesa:** The English Factory House building is a testimony of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance and the relevance of the British community in the city, traditionally engaged in the Port-wine trade. Designed by Englishman John Whitehead in a Palladian style, it was erected in 1785-90.
16. **Casa do Infante:** The city's former customs house is considered to be the birthplace of Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), the great promoter of the early Portuguese maritime voyages of the 15th century. Currently, it houses the City Historical Archive.
17. **Postigo do Carvão:** It is the only surviving of the 17 gates of the medieval wall – known as the Fernandine Wall. Having lost its defensive role, most of the wall was demolished in the 18th and 19th centuries.
18. **Praça da Ribeira:** One of the oldest squares in the city, in the 18th century, plans were drawn to monumentalize it. However, just the north and west fronts were concluded. To the east, medieval buildings survive to this day. In the 1980s, a recovered 17th century fountain was reconstructed to be topped by a modern sculpture known as "the Cube".