

The town of Ericeira

The town, a thriving fishing centre, received its first charter in 1229 from the Master of the Order of Avis, Fr. Fernando Rodrigues Monteiro, and a new royal charter from King Manuel on August 31, 1513. In 1622, Philip IV of Spain created the title of Count of Ericeira, which he granted to his chief steward, Don Diogo de Meneses. This was the beginning of a period of economic and urban development shown in a flourish of architectural activity: construction of the count's residence and the council buildings, improvements to many of the churches and growth of the town itself. A municipality until 1855, Ericeira's port was one of the most important in the area west of Lisbon. It was from the fishermen's beach, on October 5th, 1910, that the Portuguese royal family began its journey into exile. Over the past century the town has become a popular tourist destination, and tourism has remained its vocation to the present day.

Religious Cults

The five churches and chapels of Ericeira's historic town centre enshrine a great part of the town's cultural heritage. Successive generations have left their mark on the town's layout, on its stock of residential houses, on the craft traditions of land and sea and also on its religious heritage. To delve into the different aspects of religious practice in Ericeira is to discover a rich and complex vein of its history. And while the sea clearly occupies a dominant position (as shown by the importance of St. Peter and *Nossa Senhora da Boa Viagem* - Our Lady of Safe Journeys), other less obvious religious devotions are also essential to understand the identity of the people of Ericeira.

Guided tours to Ericeira's historic town centre

Every 2nd Saturdays from May to September
(previous registration).

Contacts and Registration

Casa de Cultura Jaime Lobo e Silva – Ericeira
Rua Mendes Leal
2655-305 Ericeira
Tel.: 261 860 550
e-mail: casa.cultura.ericeira@cm-mafra.pt

Complexo Cultural Quinta da Raposa – Mafra
Largo Coronel Brito Gorjão
2640-492 Mafra
Tel.: 261 819 711
e-mail: museu.sbranco@cm-mafra.pt

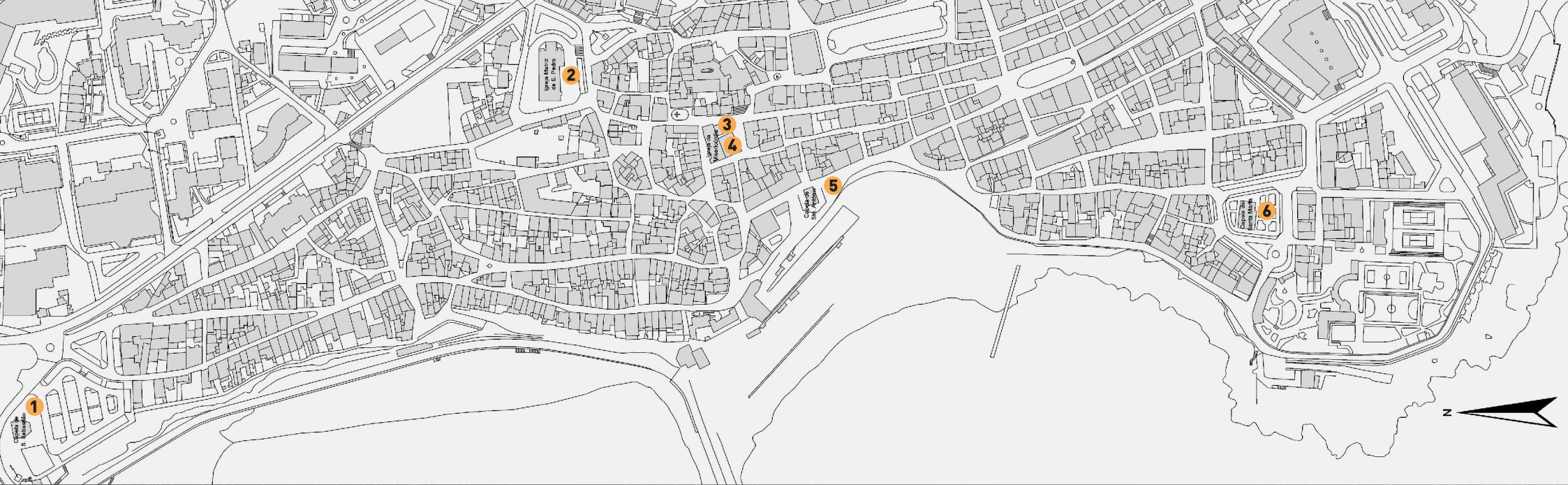
www.cm-mafra.pt



DEVOTIONS

Ericeira's Religious Heritage





1. Chapel of St. Sebastian

Set apart on the cliffs north of the town, this chapel already existed in 1567. It is built on a hexagonal plan, covered by a dome, and is in the mannerist style of the mid-16th century, as evinced in its classical doorways. The body of the main chapel is an extension built from 1678 on. This is approximately the date of the brightly coloured tiles that decorate the inside walls and the carved marble inset in the main altar. It was the home of the *confraria*, or fraternity, of unmarried young men and festivals in honour of St. Vincent and St. Sebastian were held in its churchyard.



2. Church of St. Peter

Documented from 1446, this was a small chapel outside the town proper that did not become its main church until around 1530, the period to which the renaissance St. Peter on the side entrance to the south belongs. A manueline slab in the baptismal chapel constitutes the oldest remaining element of the building. The major renovation that turned the humble chapel into the town's biggest and most ornate church began in the first half of the 17th century and was completed around 1745, the year in which the building of the main retable was commissioned. This is in the rococo style, as are the tiled panels of the nave, which depict scenes from the life and legend of the church's patron saint: pride of place goes to the panel in which Christ hands the keys to the future pope. In the main chapel the iconography of St. Peter continues on four canvasses alluding to the cycle of the apostle and the miracle of the catch. In the 19th century the elegant choir on the north side was built and the interior was decorated with numerous paintings originating from defunct monasteries.



3. Misericórdia Church

In 1678 Ericeira's council donated the Chapel of the Holy Spirit to Francisco Lopes Franco. It fell to this nobleman, with the fishermen's help, to lay the foundations of the new church, whose crypt received his mortal remains four years later. This is a baroque building, completed in the 18th century, and the paintings of the *Visitation* and the *Virgin of Mercy* date from that period. Like the painting on the ceiling of the nave, they are the work of Manuel António de Góis. The brothers of the Misericórdia, or charitable hospital, attended the religious offices on the chairs built into the wall, onto which there opens a lateral choir that led directly to the hostel and hospital. The painting on the main retable is dedicated to *Our Lady of the Rosary*, one of the town's most important fraternities.



4. Misericórdia Museum and Archive

Established in the former outbuildings of the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary, the hostel and the hospital, it was founded on June 1, 1937, as a memorial space to Ericeira's past. Among its many fine exhibits are the nine 16th century canvasses of the *Passion of Christ* cycle, which were carried through the streets of Ericeira during the Procession of the Bonfires (on the Thursday before Easter). The museum's collection of paintings also includes *Our Lady of Mercy* and the *Visitation*, both of which date from the first half of the 18th century, along with a number of ex-voto offerings. It also boasts several sculptures in marble and wood, including one of *Our Lady in Majesty*, which was made in the 17th century and came to Ericeira from Goa. As well as liturgical objects and vestments, the museum's collection of engravings is also of interest, including Spanish works from the second half of the 18th century which depict physical works of charity.



5. Chapel of Our Lady of Safe Journeys

Keeping watch over the fishermen's beach, this was the headquarters of the fraternity of Our Lady of Safe Journeys for Men of the Sea. For centuries the bell and lantern that made known the port's location at night and in times of fog and storm were kept on the small west-facing platform. Rebuilt around 1644, its interior was decorated a short time afterwards with patterned tiles, while the space above the triumphal arch was set aside for a small panel alluding to the *Lady of Safe Journeys*. The statue of our lady was worshipped until 1912, when it was vandalised and thrown into the sea. The chapel is also dedicated to Saint Anthony.



6. Church of Saint Martha

Documented as early as the 15th century, this church was dedicated to Our Lady of Health, because of the proximity of springs that bubble from the rocks south of the town, and also probably because it was associated with a thermal retreat. The statue of our lady was the focus of a considerable cult until 1599, when it was taken to Lisbon to become the basis of the *Convento das Necessidades* monastery. The current building dates from 1760, and the main retable displays a sculpture of *Senhora das Necessidades* (Our Lady of Necessities), flanked by Saint Martha and Saint Lucy. The tiles on the walls of the main chapel represent the *Annunciation* and the *Birth of Christ*.



Tile Panels

Anyone walking through the winding streets of the historic centre of Ericeira will find on the white facades of many houses a considerable number of tile panels illustrating the particular devotions of the former occupants. Symbolically protecting the main entrances to the dwellings concerned, these patterns invoked divine protection against natural catastrophes, a constant source of fear in a community that had to live with the moods of the sea.