

BEJA TOURIST GUIDE



Index

BEJA, A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD CITY	3
TOP PLACES TO VISIT	5
Castle and Keep	5
Jorge Vieira Museum – House of Arts	6
Core Visigoth – Church of Santo Amaro	7
Beja Cathedral	8
Beja Regional Museum – Queen Dona Leonor Museum	9
Pharmacy Museum and Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy	10
Church of Our Lady of Pleasures	11
Church of Mercy and Republic Square	12
Beja Arts and Archaeology Center	13
Sembrano Street Museum Center	14
Vista Alegre Park	15
Luiz da Rocha Pastry Shop	16
City Park	17
Five Kings River Beach	18
Roman Villa of Pisiones	19
OTHER PLACES TO DISCOVER	20
OUTSIDE OF BEJA	21

BEJA, A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD CITY

Beja is a city with immense history, having been inhabited by various peoples over thousands of years, due to its strategic location. The city was founded by the Celts in 400 BC.

In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the city became part of the Roman Empire, to which it belonged for more than 600 years, thanks to peace treaties. First in the province of Hispania Ulterior and then in the province of Lusitania, the colony of Pax Julia (*Pax Ivlia* , in Latin) was founded by Julius Caesar. At that time, Latin, a language of Roman origin, was established, lasting forever with phonetic and linguistic changes due to the evolution of peoples.

For 300 years, it was integrated into Visigothic Hispania, after the fall of the Roman Empire. In the 5th century, after a brief period in which it was the seat of the Alans, the Suevi took the city. They were succeeded by the Visigoths, and the city was renamed *Paca*.

From the year 714 to 1162, for more than 400 years, the city declined in importance and was under the possession of the Arabs, first under the Caliphate of Córdoba and then under the rule of the Abbadids of the Taifa Kingdom of Seville, who changed its name to *Baja*, a phonetic alteration of *Paca* (the Arabic language does not have the sound "p"). During this period, the poet-king al-Mu'tamid was born in the city and he dedicated many of his works to love, maidens and young men. In 1159, Christians, under the command of D. Afonso Henriques (the first King of Portugal), conquered the city, which was lost and finally reconquered in 1162.

Created by King Afonso V of Portugal in 1453, the title of Duke of Beja was given to the second male child. The Dukes of Beja came to live in the city, founding the Convent of Our Lady of the Conception, where the Beja Regional Museum is currently located.

The city's great moment of change occurred in 1484, with the conferral of the title of Duke of Beja on D. Manuel I, who would later become King of Portugal between 1495 and 1521. At that time, a new space was reopened, Praça D. Manuel I, where the Town Hall, which had operated next to the Church of Santa Maria, was moved, and the first hospital, known as Hospital de Nossa Senhora da Piedade or Hospital da Misericórdia, was built in 1490.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the city was heavily destroyed during the French Invasions between 1807 and 1811.

From the 20th century onwards, a certain economic development emerged, with the construction of schools, the new Lyceum (1937), the new Hospital (1970), Higher Education Schools, as well as new facilities for public and commercial bodies.

In the 21st century, small businesses emerged in the hotel, wine tourism, catering and agriculture sectors, becoming headquarters for public companies, such as EDIA (Alqueva Development and Infrastructure Company), Águas Públicas do Alentejo and Beja Airport, after the conversion of Military Air Base No. 11.

You can find out where the places to visit are located by clicking on “ [Google Maps](#) ” for each location.

TOP PLACES TO VISIT

Castle and Keep

Beja Castle is a medieval fortress, arranged in a pentagonal plan, flanked by six towers, including the Keep. The construction of the castle and wall was the royal initiative of D. Afonso III (King of Portugal from 1249 until his death in 1279), which included the reconstruction of the city's fortification system. The walled enclosure that surrounded the city was reinforced by 40 towers and pierced by 7 gates. Throughout the city, it is possible to see some of these entrances (Portas de Aljustrel, Portas de Moura or Portas de Mértola). Next to the castle are the Portas de Avis and Portas de Évora (Roman Arch).

The majestic **Torre de Menagem** (photo on the cover) was built by D. Dinis in 1310. It is the largest tower in the Iberian Peninsula, measuring approximately 40 meters high, and can be seen from kilometers away from the city of Beja. It is considered one of the most beautiful keep towers in Europe, in which the warlike and artistic character of the Gothic style converge. With a quadrangular plan, it consists of three floors. To reach the top, you have to climb 183 steps. Along the way, you will see numerous symbols inscribed on the stones. These are the marks that the stonemasons left to sign their work and thus be able to charge for each completed block. Instead of being paid by the day, these highly skilled workers were paid by the piece. Climbing the tower gives you a stunning, unobstructed view of the city of Beja and the Alentejo plains.

The **Governor's House** is located inside the castle, where the Tourist Office and the Jorge Vieira Museum – Casa das Artes are currently located. It is believed that its construction began in the 15th century, by order of D. João II to receive Infante D. Afonso and Princess Isabel of Aragon, on their honeymoon.



OPENING HOURS:

Every day:

Castle: 9:30am – 12:30pm / 2:00pm – 6:00pm

Keep: 9:30am – 12:00pm / 2:00pm – 5:15pm



ADMISSION: Castle – Free.

Keep – €2



LOCATION:

Largo Dr. Lima Faleiro

[Google Maps](#)

Jorge Vieira Museum – House of Arts

The **Jorge Vieira Museum – Cada das Artes**, is a contemporary art museum and has been located in the Governor's House, inside the Castle, since September 2019. The space is part of the collection that the artist Jorge Vieira donated to the City of Beja in 1994. The space is made up of an important set of sculptures, models and drawings by the artist who marked Portuguese art in the 20th century. The artist's most emblematic work in the city is the “Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner”, inaugurated on April 25, 1994. This work is located next to the old Convent of São Francisco, in Largo D. Nuno Álvares Pereira. Another beautiful work is the “Memorial to Jorge Vieira”, located at the roundabout next to the cemetery, on Rua de Lisboa. It was opened in 1999, on the initiative of former mayor José Manuel Carreira Marques.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Every day:

9:30 am – 12:30 pm / 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

 **ADMISSION:** Free

 **LOCATION:**

Largo Dr. Lima Faleiro (Casa do Governador/Castelo de Beja)

[Google Maps](#)



Core Visigoth – Church of Santo Amaro

The **Visigothic Nucleus of the Beja Regional Museum** is located in the **Church of Santo Amaro**, founded at the beginning of the 16th century. The site is made up of pieces from the Visigoth period, a people of Germanic origin, during their presence in the Iberian Peninsula, between the 5th and 8th centuries. In this space there are several objects that mark the presence of the Visigoths in the city, such as capitals, shafts (part of the column between the capital and the base), architectural pieces of religious origin, funerary tombstones and an iron sword, decorated in gold and amber, found at the beginning of the 20th century, in a tomb next to the current Beja cemetery. This collection is one of the most important in Portugal.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Tuesday to Sunday:
10:00 – 12:30 / 14:00 – 17:30
Closed: Saturday and Sunday.

 **LOCATION:**

Largo de Santo Amaro (Igreja de Santo Amaro)
[Google Maps](#)

 **ADMISSION:** Free



Beja Cathedral

The **Cathedral** , also called the Church of Santiago Maior, is one of the oldest churches in Beja. The temple, in Mannerist style, was inaugurated in 1590, after being built by Archbishop D. Teotônio de Bragança. The interior is richly decorated, with highlights including the altarpiece in the main chapel in gilded woodwork, by the Lisbon master Manuel João da Fonseca, dating from the 17th century, the polychrome altarpieces in the side chapels and the painting on the altar of Saint Joseph attributed to André Reinoso, the first Baroque painter in Portugal. In the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Conception, it is possible to see a set of blue and white tile panels from the 18th century.


Between 1932 and 1937, restoration work was carried out, in which the Mannerist and Baroque components were highlighted, and the Cathedral's treasure was enriched with pieces of sacred art from extinct convents in Lisbon, from deposits of the Ministry of War, the Royal Palace of Necessidades and the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa. In 2015, after further restoration, it was reopened to the public, achieving a fantastic restoration, preserving all the history and beauty of the monument.

In 2018, the **Cathedral Museum was opened**, comprising part of the collection of paintings, canvases and altarpieces of the Diocese of Beja, dating from between the 15th and 20th centuries.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Open only during religious sessions.

 **ADMISSION:** Free

 **LOCATION:**
Largo do Lidador
[Google Maps](#)



Beja Regional Museum – Queen Dona Leonor Museum

The **Regional Museum of Beja** , also called the Queen Dona Leonor Museum, is a Gothic building from 1459. It was once the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, founded by the infantes D. Fernando and D. Brites, parents of King D. Manuel I and Dona Leonor, having operated and received nuns for 400 years.

It was from this convent that the famous Portuguese nun, Soror Mariana Alcoforado (1640-1723), wrote her 5 love letters to the French knight Noel Bouton, Marquis of Chamilly. The letters were initially published in 1669, under the title " *Les Lettres de la Religieuse Portugaise* ". The barred window, known as Mariana's window, is a symbol of the convent and the city, as it was through which the nun looked at her love.

In 1927, the museum was created in the old convent, receiving several collections from other convents and palaces in the city, such as paintings, silver processional platforms, large Roman capitals, jewelry and various religious objects. Walking inside, you can see the beautiful paintings by Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch masters, including a beautiful *Ecce Homo* , dating from 1502, Portuguese and Hispano-Arab tiles that cover the walls, as well as the Church of the old convent, Chapter Room, Coat of Arms Room and the beautiful cloister.

In 2017, a 1st-century bust, carved in marble and found in 1900 during demolition work on part of the wall, was exhibited as one of the rare portraits of Julius Caesar, military and political leader of the Roman Empire.



OPENING HOURS:

Temporarily closed for renovation works.



LOCATION:

Largo da Conceição

[Google Maps](#)



Pharmacy Museum and Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy

The **Pharmacy Museum** , part of the Museum Nucleus of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Beja, is located in the city's old hospital, called Hospital Grande de Nossa Senhora da Piedade or Hospital da Misericórdia, built in 1490 by D. Manuel I. The building has been a National Monument since 2006, and in it you can see furniture from the old hospital, medical instruments, bottles with the names of reagents and utensils for the production of drugs, anatomical images, among other objects and instruments necessary to treat the sick.

Next to the museum is the **Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy** , founded in 1613 by Martim Gonçalves da Câmara, priest and Secretary of State. Of simple construction, it features several paintings by André de Reinoso, from the 17th century. The altar and walls of the chapel are covered in gilded carvings.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Monday to Friday:
9:30am – 6:00pm

 **LOCATION:**

Rua Dom Manuel I, nº 19
[Google Maps](#)

 **ADMISSION:** Free



Church of Our Lady of Pleasures

The **Church of Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres** was built in 1672. Those looking from the outside have no idea of the beauty of its interior, featuring a simple white façade, common to all churches in the region, but upon entering, the church is superb. Inside, you can see tile panels by Gabriel del Barco, paintings and coverings with baroque carvings by the painter António Bernardes and carver Manuel Fonseca from 1687, as well as the body of the church, whose ceiling is painted in fresco.

The church is part of the Diocese of Beja.

**OPENING HOURS:**

Tuesday to Saturday:

2:30pm – 6:30pm

Closed: Sunday and Monday.

**LOCATION:**

Largo dos Prazeres, nº 4

[Google Maps](#)




ADMISSION: Free



Church of Mercy and Republic Square

The **Church of Misericórdia** was built by Infante D. Luís III, Duke of Beja, in the 16th century. The monument is a beautiful example of Renaissance architecture in Portugal, having been inspired by the *loggias* of Italian cities, such as the *Loggia dei Lanzi* in Florence. It was designed to be a butcher's shop (market), but during construction the work became so beautiful and majestic that it was transformed into a place of religious worship, "*the great stone building that I ordered to be built for the slaughterhouse in the square, which God seems to have wanted to be as beautiful as it was poorly used for such a lowly function*", said D. Luís III.

 **OPENING HOURS:**
Open every day.

 **ADMISSION:** Free

 **LOCATION:**
Praça da República
[Google Maps](#)



Facing the church, we have **Praça da República**, the city's main square. On the opposite side of the square, it is possible to see the **Pelourinho de Beja**, built by D. Manuel I after granting the charter to the city of Beja, in 1521, serving as a symbol of the municipality's autonomy. Like other royal works of the time, it features monarchist symbols, such as the armillary sphere, the iron cross of Christ, flowers between spirals and rings along the pillory.

On the right side of the church, we have the **Beja City Council building**, built between 1948 and 1953.

Beja Arts and Archaeology Center

The Beja Arts and Archaeology Center (CAAB) is the result of the rehabilitation and union of two old buildings located in Praça da República. It opened in 2021, with the aim of presenting temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. For more information about the exhibition on display, visit the official website of the Beja City Council.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Tuesday to Saturday:

10:30 am – 1:00 pm / 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

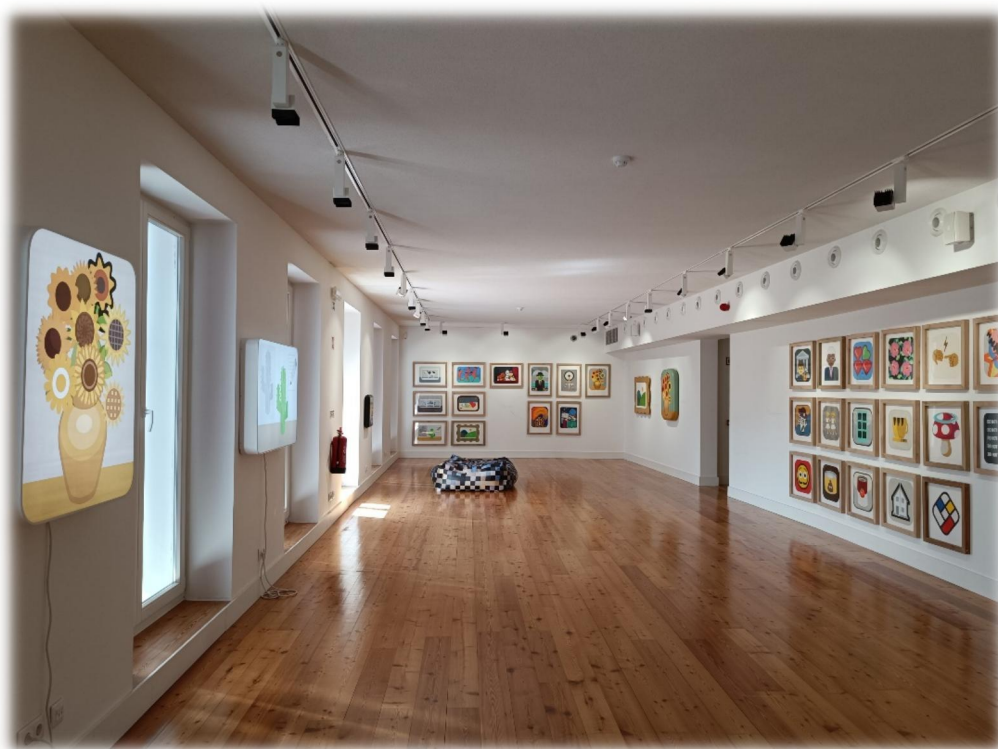
Closed: Sunday and Monday.

 **ADMISSION: 2€**

 **LOCATION:**

Praça da República, nº 42

[Google Maps](#)



Sembrano Street Museum Center

The **Rua do Sembrano Museum Centre** includes a series of archaeological discoveries that range from prehistoric times to the contemporary era. The oldest elements indicate that the city was occupied in the Copper Age (3000 BC), proving the theory that there was already an important urban settlement on the site where Beja currently stands before the Romans.

The archaeological finds can be viewed through a glass floor structure, allowing for an impressive historical reading, such as a section of a wall built before the Roman occupation. It is also possible to see some structures from the Roman period, such as the remains of a bathhouse and part of a house or commercial establishment from the Roman era.

In addition to this component, the space also includes a permanent exhibition, in which objects removed from excavations carried out on site can be seen, providing an impressive summary of the city's history, and temporary exhibitions related to the region's archaeology and historical heritage.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Tuesday to Sunday:

9:30 am – 12:30 pm / 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Closed: Monday and holidays.

 **ADMISSION:** Free

 **LOCATION:**

Largo de São João

[Google Maps](#)



Vista Alegre Park

Parque **Vista Alegre** is a recent space, allowing you to observe the city's past and present. This space, which connects Rua Capitão João Francisco de Sousa and Rua do Sembrano, allows you to see the old medieval wall. This wall was built during the reign of D. Afonso III (13th century), functioning as a city fortress. On one of the wall's turrets, you can see the head of a bull, which may date back to the time of Emperor Augustus.

It is also possible to observe urban art, that is, works by urban artists *Add Fuel* and the world-renowned Alexandre Farto (*Vhils*). *Vhils* ' work consists of several faces carved into a wall.

 **OPENING HOURS:**

Every day:
8:00 am – 6:00 pm

 **LOCATION:**

Rua Capitão João Francisco de Sousa
[Google Maps](#)

 **ADMISSION:** Free



Luiz da Rocha Pastry Shop

Café e Pastelaria Luiz da Rocha (space 1) was founded in 1893 and is located in the iconic Portas de Mértola, a traditional shopping area and one of the most beautiful streets in Beja. This is a unique and welcoming space that provides the city of Beja with a pleasant meeting point, leisure, communication and relaxation, keeping alive the spirit and atmosphere of the classic café-meeting rooms. Don't forget to try the bundles from the Royal Convent of Our Lady of Conception or the delicious cottage cheese tarts. Not visiting this unique place is like going to Lisbon and not visiting the famous Pastéis de Belém. If you don't want to taste the fantastic cakes, just go and visit an old café full of history.

Also try the **Restaurant**, located on the 1st floor, where you can enjoy typical Alentejo food, such as açorda alentejana, migas à alentejana, among other dishes, of excellent quality.

Luiz da Rocha (space 2), is located on Avenida Fialho de Almeida, close to the Melius Hotel.



OPENING HOURS:

PASTRY

From Monday to Saturday:

8:00 am – 11:00 pm

Sunday:

8:00 am – 8:00 pm

RESTAURANT

From Monday to Saturday:

12:00 – 15:30

7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Sunday:

12:00 – 15:30



LOCATION:

Rua Cap. João Francisco Sousa, nº 63

[Google Maps](#) (Space 1 and restaurant)

Avenida Fialho de Almeida, nº 55

[Google Maps](#) (Space 2)


City Park

The City Park is an extensive green area of 9 hectares, offering multiple leisure and recreation options, such as a central lake, restaurant (Espelho D'Água), café with terrace, canidrome and playground.

Inside, you can see the **monument in honor of the king and poet al-Mu'tamid** , born in Beja in 1040, being the only king who was born in the city, also becoming one of the greatest poets of his time.

On May 18, 2023, Beja Municipal Holiday, the park changed its name to **José Manuel da Costa Carreira Marques City Park** , in honor of the former President of the Beja City Council.

 **OPENING HOURS:**
24h/day.

 **LOCATION:**
Parque da Cidade
[Google Maps](#)



Five Kings River BEACH

The **Cinco Reis river beach** , opened in July 2020, is built on a reservoir in the Alqueva irrigation system and is located approximately 9 km from the city of Beja.

On site there is a café, toilet, awning and cabin rental, playground, picnic area, bird watching shelters, a pier for nautical activities and two parking lots. It has lifeguards, a first aid post and since 2021 it has been a Blue Flag beach. Access to the beach for people with reduced mobility is also guaranteed.



OPENING HOURS:

Summer Period (June to September)



LOCATION:

Parque Fluvial de Cinco Reis

[Google Maps](#)



Roman Villa of Pisiones

The **Roman Villa of Pisões** is located about 10 kilometers from Beja and is an archaeological site from the Roman period, between the 1st century BC and 4th century AD, having been discovered only in 1967.

It was home to successive owners who controlled the land for agricultural exploitation around the villa. The house, now in ruins, had more than 40 rooms and was used as a residence by the owners, members of the elite of *Pax Julia* (current city of Beja). There, you can see beautiful mosaics that decorated the floor of the house, the hot springs with heated water for the leisure time of the owners and guests, still well preserved (not due to human action, but thanks to the quality of the construction), the swimming pool measuring approximately 40 meters long, grinding wheels, marble slabs and columns. The rest of what would have been the house disappeared over the course of 2,000 years. The estate where the Villa is located is owned by the University of Évora.



OPENING HOURS:

Tuesday to Sunday:

9:00 am – 12:30 pm / 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Closed: Monday.



LOCATION:

Herdade de Almocreva (Penedo Gordo)

[Google Maps](#)



ADMISSION: 3€



OTHER PLACES TO DISCOVER

-  Church of Santa Maria and Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary
 Largo de Santa Maria
-  Pax Julia Cinema-Theater
 Largo de São João
-  Portu-Galo, by artist Bordalo II (urban art)
 Next to the Museum Center of Rua do Sembrano
-  UNESCO Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
 Rua do Sembrano, nº 74
-  Manueline window
 Rua Dr. Afonso Costa (antiga Rua das Lojas), nº 38
-  Old Mouraria neighborhood
 Rua da Mouraria
-  Public Garden/Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral Gardens
 Rua Dom Nuno Alvares Pereira
-  Municipal Swimming Pool Open (summer)
 Avenida do Brasil
-  Patella Window
 Rua do Ulmo
-  House of Culture/Bed Library
 Rua Luís de Camões
-  Chapel of Saint Andrew
 Rua de Lisboa
-  Botanical Museum
 Escola Superior Agrária de Beja - Campus do Instituto Politécnico de Beja

OUTSIDE OF BEJA



Guadiana River



Village of Quintos



Wine tourism



Cranes Estate *



New Malhadinha Farm *



Mingorra Estate



Vau Estate



Fig Tree Farm



Hotel Vila Galé Alentejo Vineyards & Olive *



Paço do Conde Farm

(*) Location with restaurant



Hot Air Balloon Ride



Emotion - Life on adventure (Figueirinha Estate)



Fun for kids



Hotel Vila Galé Nep Kids

BEJA TOURIST GUIDE