

THE CHEST GAZETTE

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” Belem Tower ”

“Torre de Belém” (Torre de São Vicente) is a fortification located on the right bank of the Tagus River, where the beach of Belém once existed.

The monument is an icon of Portuguese architecture, in a synthesis between the keep of medieval tradition and the modern bastion, where artillery pieces were available, and belongs to a formation of defense of the Tagus basin ordered to be erected by João II of Portugal.

Over time, the tower lost its defense function, and the storehouses gave way to dungeons for political prisoners during the 16th century. Part of its beauty lies in the exterior decoration, adorned with ropes and knots carved in stone, open galleries, watchtowers in the Moorish style and battlements in the form of shields decorated with armillary spheres, the cross of the Order of Christ and naturalistic elements, such as a rhinoceros, alluding to navigations. The Gothic interior, underneath the terrace, which served as an armory and prison, is very austere.

Currently, it stands out for its implicit nationalism, since it is all surrounded by decorations of the Coat of Arms of Portugal, referring to the typical architecture of a time when the country was a global power (that of the beginning of the Modern Age).

The connotation of the volumetric shape of the stone tower with a ship reflects beauty, originality, and innovation. At its four floors, we may find the Governor's Room, the Kings' Room, the Audience Room and, finally, the Chapel with its characteristic 16th century vaults are maintained.

It was classified in 1983 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site



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