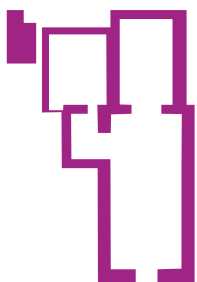




40.

## CHURCH OF SAINT MARY OF SOBRETÂMEGA



Rua da Igreja  
Sobretâmega  
Marco de Canaveses



41° 11' 41.56" N  
8° 9' 42.09" W



+351 918 116 488



Sunday  
8 and 11 am



Saint Mary  
15<sup>th</sup> August



Public Interest Building  
1971



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The history of the Church of Sobretâmega, built on top of a hill over the right bank of the river Tâmega and close to the north entrance of the submerged medieval bridge, should be understood taking into account its relationship with the river, the bridge and the also Romanesque Church of Saint Nicholas (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 179), built on the opposite bank.

The fluvial barrier did not hinder the development of a town with a unilinear shape on both sides of an important road that channelled the commercial traffic that ran parallel to the Douro on the north bank; it was divided into two parishes, Canaveses and Sobretâmega, each with its own parish and patron saint, Saint Nicholas and Saint Mary. However, despite the medieval character associated with the worship of Saint Mary Major, the truth is that it is possible that this Church, surely built after 1320, replaced an older church dedicated to Saint Peter, which was still asked to pay a contribution for the Crusades. Sobretâmega stands out as one of the most accomplished examples of what has been called the "resistance Romanesque" style. The walls of the Church, sober and closed in on itself, are occasionally marked by narrow crevices.



## THE BRIDGE OF CANAVESSES

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This bridge seems to have replaced a Roman bridge that ensured a connection between Tongobriga (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 275) and the coast in this area of the river Tâmega. However, its importance was retrieved, especially during the Middle Ages. Being an alternative to the fluvial journey to Porto along the Douro, the road that connected the inner Douro region to the Atlantic coast crossed the Tâmega in Canaveses and joined the old road between Amarante and Porto, in Penafiel. Two parishes were established,



Bridge of Canaveses (missing)

one on each side of the bridge, in order to ensure the spiritual support of the people who lived in the town that settled along the road that connected both banks. Although its construction is ascribed to the Princess Mafalda (1195-1256) (p. 158), granddaughter of King Afonso Henriques (k. 1143-1185), the first king of Portugal, the truth is that the crossing of Canaveses was a work that went on between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. With an extraordinary size, even for a medieval bridge (it counted five arches), it was demolished and replaced by a new one in the 1940's and, in 1988, the latter was submerged following the construction of the Torrão dam (Penafiel/Marco de Canaveses).

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Its portals are carved in the thickness of the walls and they do not feature columns or capitals to accommodate the Romanesque decorative compositions. On the main portal, the tympanum rests on corbels decorated with pearls carved in relief - the only decorative element that stands out. This portal was probably sheltered by a porch-like structure,

as suggested by the two corbels located halfway up the main façade. The free-standing bell tower built to the north of the chevet is a stone massif.

The sobriety of the Church's exterior is extended to the interior of the sacred space. The whitewashed walls are interrupted by the granite frames of the openings. Sobretâmega's interior does not tell us of the Romanesque period, but rather of the Modern Age. The arrangement of the triumphal arch, rather high, proves it through its pilasters and the protruding panels on the intradosum. The main altarpiece, in National Style [1690-1725] gilded woodwork, livens up this space. Its Eucharistic throne is the focus of the devotee's attention and spirituality.

We should also mention the limestone image of the so-called Saint Mary of Sobretâmega, which represents the Marian worship established in this temple from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

