

QUICK VISITOR GUIDE

- **Foundation:** Late 11th century (circa 1090).
- **Founder:** Egas Pais de Penegate.
- **Monastic Rule:** Order of Saint Benedict (Benedictine Black Monks).
- **Architectural Style:** Mannerist, Baroque, and National Gilded Woodcarving.
- **Classification:** Protected National Heritage (includes the church, cloister ruins, and fountain).

1. THE FOUNDATIONS & ROYAL ALLIANCES (11th–12th Century)

A Grand Geopolitical Strategy: Following the Council of Coyanza (1055), the Kings of León and Castile (Ferdinand the Great and Alfonso VI) promoted the integration of local monasteries into the Benedictine Order. Rendufe emerged from this high royal patronage and an alliance between the Leonese court and the Pope.

Populating the Land: This political-religious alliance aimed to establish the Roman rite in the territories of the Kingdom of León, alongside promoting the gradual settlement of populations to boost a fragile agricultural economy.

Noble Protection: Supported by the arrival of Bishop St. Gerald in Braga and Count Henry in the County of Portugal, Rendufe was founded around 1090 by the local nobility—specifically Egas Pais de Penegate—who maintained close ties to the Court.

The First Stone: By 1151, the original medieval church was complete, a milestone recorded in a historic inscription still visible today at the base of the transept arch in the main chapel.



MONASTERY OF RENDUFE

*A Millennium of History,
Devotion, and Heritage*

MONASTERY OF RENDUFE
Avenida do Mosteiro, 4720-000
Amares

2. THE CENTURIES OF CRISIS & SCANDAL (14th–16th Century)

The Black Plague & War: After a prosperous period during the 12th and 13th centuries, the 14th century brought severe crises to Portugal. The Black Death and King D. Fernando's wars with Castile heavily impacted religious communities.

The Monastic Dissolution: By the early 15th century, the Archbishop extinguished several failing Benedictine monasteries in the region.

The Papal Suppression: In 1401, Pope Boniface IX suppressed Rendufe, converting it into a secular collegiate church due to severe misconduct by the monks—including the shocking assassination of two abbots and a chaplain. Just eight days later, claiming he had been misinformed, the Pope restored the monastery and appointed Master André Dias de Escobar as the new abbot.

The Commendatory Era: For the next 160 years, the monastery fell into the hands of "commendatory abbots" appointed by monarchs or the Pope. Many were not even clergymen and focused solely on collecting revenue rather than fostering spiritual life. The last commendatory abbot, D. Henrique de Sousa, rebuilt the monastery in stone but was also murdered in 1567.

3. THE REFORM & ARCHITECTURAL SPLENDOR (1567–1834)

The Benedictine Congregation Reform

In 1567, Fr. Pedro de Basto took charge, formally integrating Rendufe into the Congregation of the Black Monks of St. Benedict of Portugal. This ended the corrupt system of commendatory pensions. Abbots were now democratically elected every three years at the Motherhouse of São Martinho de Tibães. This newfound stability triggered major architectural upgrades in 1629 and 1638, adopting the characteristic Mannerist façade.

THE MASTERPIECE CHURCH (Inaugurated 1719)

- *Architect: Miguel Fernandes (from Cossourado, Barcelos)*

- *Construction Time: Built in just 3 years*

- *Total Cost: 13,000 cruzados and 100,000 reis (a fortune!)*

- *Layout: Latin cross, single nave, and deep chancel.*

Exterior & Interior Grandeur

Exterior Architecture: Following the strict, austere guidelines of St. Charles Borromeo, the exterior displays severe façades ending in a simple triangular pediment. Large windows illuminate the choir, while niches above the main door display statues of the Order's founders, St. Benedict and St. Scholastica.

The Golden Interior (1719–1725): The inside was filled with magnificent gilded woodcarvings (*talha dourada*) in the "National style". It included an impressive main altarpiece, six side altars featuring saint statues adorned with silver halos and croziers, and a monumental carved choir stall.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel: Built between 1777 and 1780, this new chapel was built entirely out of stone with flawless perfection, enhanced by tasteful woodcarving valances and an oculus above the transept arch to flood the church with radiant light.

4. FROM EXTINCTION TO THE MODERN RECOVERY

"In 1834, the extinction of all Religious Orders in Portugal marked the end of monastic life in Rendufe."

Tragedy Strikes: The church became a local parish church, but the monastic enclosure (*cerca*) and its dependencies were sold to private buyers. In 1870, a devastating fire destroyed a massive portion of the ancient monastery buildings.

The Heritage Today: Currently, the original monastic space is fragmented across multiple private owners, which prevents a single global intervention.

The Path to Rehabilitation: An emergency intervention program and a recovery, rehabilitation, and valorization plan are underway. Managed by the public heritage authorities, these efforts aim to preserve the surviving structures, leaving the door open for a global restoration of the monastery in the near future.

Protected Ruins: Visitors today can still appreciate the majestic parish church, the monumental ruins of the cloister, and the historic convent fountain.

Credits & Institutional Information: Brochure **Content:** Coordinated by Paulo Oliveira (Coordinator of the Monasteries of Tibães, Pombeiro, Rendufe, and Vilar de Frades).

Historical Sources: District Archive of Braga - University of Minho (ADB-UM); Instructions on Sacred Architecture by St. Charles Borromeo (1577).