Congonhas, São João del-Rei and Tiradentes

ITINERARIES
Congonhas

Santuário Bom Jesus de Matosinhos
Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos

The Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos is not only famous for religious matters, but also because it holds one of the largest Brazilian artistic heritage: The splendid work performed by master Antônio Francisco Lisboa, aka Aleijadinho, which completes the holiness of the Sanctuary. There are 12 prophets in soapstone, in the forecourt of the Basilica, and 66 figures in cedar, along the Stations of the Cross.

From Feliciano Mendes’s faith the fabulous work of the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos was born, which finished with a flourish the 18th century in the province of Minas Gerais. And in 1985 earned the title of World Heritage by the United Nations (UNESCO).

The Visit

Visit as if you were a devotee from the 19th century. Start from the chapel of the Last Supper, so you will better understand the logic of the Sanctuary. The placement of the chapels in the ascent of the hill was inspired by the European sacred mountains, places of penance and meditation on the Passion of Christ. While making the effort of climbing, one can visit the chapels known as the Steps: Last Supper — Garden — Prison — Flagellation and Crowning with Thorns — Ascending the Calvary — The Crucifixion.

Fotos capa: Alexandre C. Mota / Sérgio Freitas / Henry Yu
Prophets at the churchyard of the Basílica Bom Jesus do Matosinhos

Fotos: Maria Lucia Dornas
“No anfiteatro das montanhas os profetas do Aleijadinho momentalizam a paisagem

Bíblia de pedra-sabão,
banhada no ouro das Minas.”

Oswald de Andrade
Capela da Ceia / Step of the Last Supper Chapel

Started in 1799 was completed in 1808.

All pieces are in cedar and close to the natural size. Most of them consists in a single block.
Capela do Horto / Step of the Gethsemane Chapel

The polychrome of Manoel da Costa Ataíde plays a role in this group more than aesthetic. It is also iconographic, since it is due exclusively to painting, the sweat of blood that rises in front of Christ.
The iconographic theme of imprisonment in the Gethsemane is portrayed in one of his most popular episodes, the miraculous healing of Malchus. This scene has forever been artists' favorite, for its high dramatic potential.
Inexplicably, after the completion of the Gethsemane and the Prison chapels, the works of the Steps have been stagnant for nearly half a century. The construction of the Scourging and Crowning with Thorns Chapel began in 1864. At that time it was decided that only six chapels of the seven originally planned would be built.
Passo da Subida ao Calvário / Step of The Ascent to Calvary Chapel

Fotos: Maria Lucia Dornas
Passo da Crucificação / Step of Crucifixion

The eleven images forming the Step of the Crucifixion, unlike the other steps, are not subject to a single focus.
After being at the chapel, it's time to visit the forecourt of the Basilica where the twelve prophets warn the people, preach God’s word, and proclaim the good news.

After going through the Stations of the Cross and the prophets, one will finally come to the door of the Basilica of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos.

The temple marks the beginning of the rococo style in Minas Gerais. The highlight of the decoration of the Basilica are the paintings. The side walls of the nave and the chancel were decorated with panels by painter João Nepomuceno Correia e Castro, who made the paintings between the years of 1778 and 1787. The life of Christ is the theme and it starts with scenes about Mary’s life.

**Address:** Praça da Basílica, s/n.
**Opening Hours:** Tuesday to Sunday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.
**Sala dos Milagres**
**The Room of Miracles**

On leaving the church, be sure to visit the Room of Miracles, where there is an excellent collection of ex-votos from the 18th and 19th centuries, and which was declared a national historic landmark by IPHAN the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute.

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**Romaria**
**The Romaria (Pilgrimage)**

After being at the Sanctuary, visit the Romaria (Pilgrimage). Go down Alameda Cidade Matosinhos de Portugal, to which access is toward the Capela da Subida ao Calvário on the left side, with the Basilica behind you.

Built in 1932, the ancient Romaria served as hostel to the faithful who came to Congonhas for the Jubileu do Senhor Bom Jesus (Jubilee of the Good Lord Jesus). In 1981 it was declared a national historic landmark, and fourteen years later it was completely rebuilt. Today it houses important cultural and touristic landmarks: Museu Sacro (Sacral Museum), Museu de Mineralogia (Museum of Mineralogy), Sala da Memória (Hall of Memory), Sala de Matosinhos (Hall of Matosinhos), Oficina de Artes (Arts Workshop), and Funcult (Cultural Foundation).
If you still have time available, visit Matriz da Conceição (Mother Church of the Immaculate Conception). In that case, go up Rua Padre João Pio, beside the City Hall.

Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora da Conceição
Mother Church Nossa Senhora da Conceição

The entrance is made of soapstone carved with shell shaped ornaments and cartouche baroque over the lintel representing Noah's Ark. The cartouche is surmounted by a royal symbol of Maria (Regina Angelorum), and on the key stone of the entrance arch, there are three heads of seraphim. The door is framed and paneled in two layers, with flags. This beautiful art sculptures is accredited to Aleijadinho.

Address: Praça Sete September
Telephone number: 31 3731-1390

Foto: Sérgio Freitas
“Congõi” is a medicinal herb found throughout the region close to the city of Congonhas, whose name originates from that plant. The word “congõi” (Congonhas), from the indigenous language Tupi, means “that which sustains,” “that which nourishes.”

The tea made from congonhas leaves is indicated as anti-inflammatory, diuretic, and sedative. Below, you will find two ways of preparing the tea which is enjoyed by the population of Congonhas and region.
Belo Horizonte e Congonhas
Belo Horizonte and Congonhas
It is possible to visit some sites in Belo Horizonte and then head to Congonhas. See suggestions in the itineraries for Belo Horizonte.

**Distance:** 78 km
**Access:** BR-040
Since the city is right beside BR-040, it is easy to combine a visit to Congonhas and other destinations.

**Tour options in the region**

1. **Congonhas, Ouro Branco and Ouro Preto**
The city of Ouro Preto is next to Congonhas and one of the oldest sections of Estrada Real (Royal Road).

   For those who will stay in Ouro Preto here’s a good option: After visiting Congonhas, go to Ouro Preto, via Ouro Branco — BR-040, heading to Rio de Janeiro. It is an opportunity to learn more about a colonial city and ride a piece of Estrada Real (Royal Road).

**Tourist Attractions in Ouro Branco:** Fazenda Carreiras (Carreiras Farm), Igreja Matriz de Santo Antônio (San Antonio Church) and Parque Estadual da Serra do Ouro Branco (State Park of Serra do Ouro Branco).
The road from Ouro Preto to Ouro Branco has remaining portions of Estrada Real (Royal Road).

**Distance** from Congonhas to Ouro Branco: 17 km  
**Access:** BR-040 and MG-443

**Distance** from Congonhas to Ouro Preto: 43 km  
Access: BR-040 and MG-443 — Estrada Real (Royal Road)

2. **Congonhas, São João del-Rei and Tiradentes**

After visiting Congonhas, you can head to the colonial towns of São João del-Rei and Tiradentes. In this case, it takes about 12 hours of sightseeing. Since time will be shared among three cities, it is necessary to choose the attractions to be visited.
São João del-Rei

Igreja de São Francisco de Assis
Church of St. Francis of Assisi

Beautiful and impressive, the Igreja de São Francisco de Assis is the main representative of the colonial religious architecture in São João del-Rei. Behind the church there is a cemetery which belongs to the Franciscan Order. The tomb of Tancredo de Almeida Neves, politician born in São João Del-Rei, is in this cemetery.

**Address:** Praça Frei Orlando

**Telephone number:** 32 3371-3966
Catedral Basílica de Nossa Senhora do Pilar
Nossa Senhora do Pilar Cathedral

Rich and beautiful, the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar is one of the prides of the religious architecture in Minas Gerais; its history is linked to the beginning of the city’s settlement. With all the pomp, peculiar to the Baroque representation of death, there the “as barroquíssimas exéquias” (the baroque obsequies) were celebrated for D. João V, in December 1750, since the Portuguese sovereign died in July 31. There, also, a Te Deum was celebrated, Catholic liturgical hymn accredited to St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, which began with the words “Te Deum Laudamus,” (You, Oh God, we praise) in satisfaction at the failure of Inconfidência Mineira (Minas Gerais Conspiracy).

Address: Rua Getulio Vargas, s/n.

After being in São João Del-Rei, it is time to visit Tiradentes.
Tiradentes

From the main square in Tiradentes — Largo das Forras — there is access to all attractions in the city. The visit to Matriz de Santo Antônio (Mother Church of St. Anthony) is a must.

Santo Antônio Mother Church

It’s a rare construction which makes the church one of the most beautiful and significant art works of baroque decoration in Minas Gerais. With privileged location, the church is in one of the highest points of the city. Its Rococo pediment was designed by Aleijadinho.

Address: Rua da Câmara
Telephone number: 32 3355-1238
Opening hours: Daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Other sites worth visiting are the Capela Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary) and Chafariz São José (St. Joseph Fountain). The sites are close by in the historic center of Tiradentes, which facilitates going from one attraction to other.

**Capela Nossa Senhora do Rosário**

**Nossa Senhora do Rosário Chapel**

It is one of the best exemplars of temples built by the Irmandade de Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary) in Minas Gerais, and one of the main sites in the historical heritage of Tiradentes. The construction of the original chapel begun in 1708 and was completed in 1719. Throughout the century it went through many changes as architecture and decor developed.

Address: Rua Direita, s/n.
Telephone number: (32) 3355-1212
Opening hours: Wednesday to Monday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Chafariz São José
São José Fountain
This beautiful and solid masonry was built by the Câmara da Vila de São José del-Rei (City Chambers of the San Jose Del Rey Village) for a threefold function: To provide the village with drinking water through the taps in the front; to wash clothes by using the right side; and as a water fountain for horses on the left side.

Address: Largo do Chafariz

After the visits, take your time visiting the artisan's shops.
Museum of Arte Sacra e Church Our Lady of Mercês – São João del-Rei

Fotos: Sérgio Freitas
Mapa: Edison Vilela
Mapas: Edison Vilela
Stay Tuned!

Few attractions open on Mondays. In the months of January and July some churches open on Monday.

Wear comfortable shoes, these sites have many steep streets and uneven pavements.

In almost all the attractions you need to save the bags and is not allowed to photograph the interior.

Visitation rates are charged.

Tip!!!
For complete information about the Monuments, Accommodation and Tourist Services, consult Ouro Preto, Mariana and Itabirito pages on section Destinations, on descubraminas.com
How to get to the region

**From Belo Horizonte — Congonhas:** 78 km
BR-040 Road — towards Rio de Janeiro

**From Congonhas — São João del-Rei:** 137 km
BR-040 Road — towards Rio de Janeiro until reaching exist to road BR-383

**From Congonhas — Tiradentes:** 127 km
BR-040 Road — towards Rio de Janeiro until reaching exist to road BR-383

**From Rio de Janeiro — Congonhas:** 356 km
BR-040 Road — towards Belo Horizonte

**From São Paulo — Congonhas:** 596 km
BR-381 Road — Fernão Dias — to Carmópolis de Minas / MG-270 — through Desterro de Entre Rios e Entre Rios de Minas / BR-381 / BR-040
Gastronomy
In this region, visitors can enjoy the most famous and delicious dishes from Minas Gerais.

Feijão Tropeiro
Beans mixed with cassava flour and bacon. Served with sausage and/or pork and egg, with side rice and chopped collards.

Tutu de Feijão
Mashed beans thickened with manioc flour. Served with sausage and/or pork and boiled eggs with side rice and chopped collards.

Frango com Quiabo
Stewed chicken with chopped okra and side rice and chopped collards.

Frango ao Molho Pardo
Chicken prepared in the chicken’s blood with side rice and angu (porridge).

Rocambole
The city Lagoa Dourada, 33 km from São João del-Rei, produces delicious Rocambole (Swiss role).

Doce de Leite
Creamy or in pieces. In the region, one can experience excellent doces de leite (sweet milk).

Sweets and candied fruit
Coconut sweets, sweet potato, and a variety of candied fruits, especially in São João del-Rei.
Shopping

The best options for those interested in buying local products are:

- Pieces made of soapstone
- Pieces made of plater
- Copies of furniture from the 18th and 19th centuries

Tapestry

Art made in handloom

Wood Sculptures

Saramenha Ceramics — in Ouro Branco

Cachaça: the region produces and markets quality cachaça
Events
Main events

Film Festival — January — Tiradentes
Carnival — moveable feast — Congonhas / São João del-Rei / Tiradentes
Easter — movable feast — Congonhas / São João del-Rei / Tiradentes
Semana da Inconfidência (Minas Gerais Conspiracy Week) — April — São João del-Rei / Tiradentes
Caminhada da Inconfidência (Conspiracy Walk) — April — Ouro Branco
Festival da Quitanda (The Homemade Sweets and Snacks Festival) — May — Congonhas
Jubileu da Santíssima Trindade (Jubilee of the Holy Trinity) — June — Tiradentes
Encontro Nacional de Harley Davidson/Carros Antigos (The Harley Davidson and Antique Cars National Gathering) — June — Tiradentes
Winter Festival — July — Sao Joao del-Rei
International Gastronomy Festival — August — Tiradentes
Jubileu Bom Jesus do Matozinhos (Jubilee of Bom Jesus do Matozinhos) — September 7 to 14 — Congonhas
Festa de Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary) — October — Congonhas / São João del-Rei / Tiradentes
Informações gerais
General Information

**Congonhas**
**Board of Tourism**
Alameda Cidade de Matosinhos de Portugal, 153 – Basílica
Telephone number: 31 3731-3100

**Tourist Help Centre**
Avenida Júlia Kubitschek, 2.039
Telephone number: 31 3731-7394

**Bus Station**
Avenida Júlia Kubitschek, 1.982
Telephone number: 31 3731-3886

**Ouro Branco**
**Municipal Department of Culture, Tourism and Sports**
Rua José Geraldo, 76
Telephone number: 31 3741-5214

**São João del-Rei**
**Department of Culture and Tourism**
Rua Frei Orlando, 90 – Centro
Telephone number: 32 3372-7338

**Bus Station**
Rua Cristovão Colombo
Telephone number: 32 3371-5617

**Tiradentes**
**Secretary of Tourism**
Rua Resende Costa, 71
Telephone number: 32 3355-1212

**Bus Station**
Telephone number: 32 3355-1212
Have a nice travel!