

Market of **Barcelos**



The Traditional Market in the Euro-Region

The territories of the Euroregion, as we all know, share a base of identity, common history and culture. This common ground is reflected in many aspects of daily life in these territories. The farming practices are excellent examples of the very meaningful connection of the man with the territory. The "art of making a market" is common to these two regions and, in the course of time, it was the way to promote direct exchanges, encounter between markets and developing some of the areas which had in this event, a moment of local affirmation. Many times, linked to different cycles of the religious calendar, it was a symbol of affirmation and geo-position of many regions in relation the importance of the market. This event was also an excellent platform for exchanging cultural, commercial and ethnographic experiences among people. The city of Barcelos, in Portugal, has, since the Middle Ages, a weekly market, which has been a true anchor for the local development, reflected, for example, in the "*measure of Barcelos*" which used to be a pricing reference for the entire region, demonstrating the importance of such events for the cultural, economic and social life of these communities.

The Market of Barcelos, the market of the markets

The market of Barcelos takes place every week, on Thursday, at the Campo da República (the market place). This is a traditional open air market focused on the local farmer's production and intimately linked to the sale of local handicraft products, such as the pottery of Barcelos, ceramic cocks, woodwork, embroidery, linens, amongst others.

No passage by the north of Portugal is complete without a visit to the weekly market of Barcelos. Thursdays are always different from any other day of the week, they are very similar to festivity days. Very early, before dawn, merchants arrive, some arrived even earlier during the night, to set up their stalls and their first clients arrive as soon as the sun rises. Later on, the city will be flooded with people from everywhere, the city, which is generally calm, becomes vibrant and dynamic. The streets and squares are full of people who profit of the day to socialize, negotiate, buy, haggle and resolve bureaucratic matters. All foreigners who visit Barcelos on Thursdays will always be amazed by this atmosphere, by the sounds and colours, so singly or in groups, these visitors wander around in the city contemplating the peculiarities which make this territory and this market unique in Portugal and a true experience of contact with the authenticity of the local culture. By the end of the afternoon all this people will slowly disappear, but only until the following week when the city, once again, welcomes the market and its people.

The origins of the Market of Barcelos

The market of Barcelos as we know it today is the result of an evolutionary process suffered over many centuries. No one knows for sure how it began or even why it is done on Thursdays. It is known, however, that the reason for its great popularity resides on its rural character, trade of traditional pottery and other handicraft of Barcelos.

Its origins remain uncertain, but it is believable that it was already done in the thirteenth century, at a time when the cereals were evaluated by the "measure of Barcelos", probably without a precise calendar or location, but it very likely occurred every two weeks.

Later on, in the year of 1412, in a Charter dated of February 19, King John I of Portugal, granted the request of his son Afonso 8th Earl of Barcelos, by the establishment of a market to be held every year between the 1st and 15th of August, at the Campo do Salvador (now Campo da Feira), as the following quote:

"...D. Afonso I granted a Charter to the municipality of Barcelos for an annual market of fifteen days, from August 1st until the day of the Virgin Mary in August "por Noyte" (by night) as information that at this time it would not be of prejudice to the other markets," que se fazem" (which are done), and also granted to this market the same privileges and franchises of the market of Trancoso." - In Virginia Rau

This annual market underwent several changes in the course of time, repeatedly changing the date, for a while it was done in October and, in 1455, it was already documented during the celebration of Corpus Christi, done in this last date it arrived almost to our days.

In the sixteenth century, the village of Barcelos expanded beyond its walls, motivated by the population growth and by the miraculous appearance of a cross, on the ground, in the area of the current market place (Campo da República), in December 1504. This event led to the pilgrimage of the 3rd of May and to the famous "Feira das Cruzes" (Market of the Crosses) held between the 1st and the 3rd of this month.

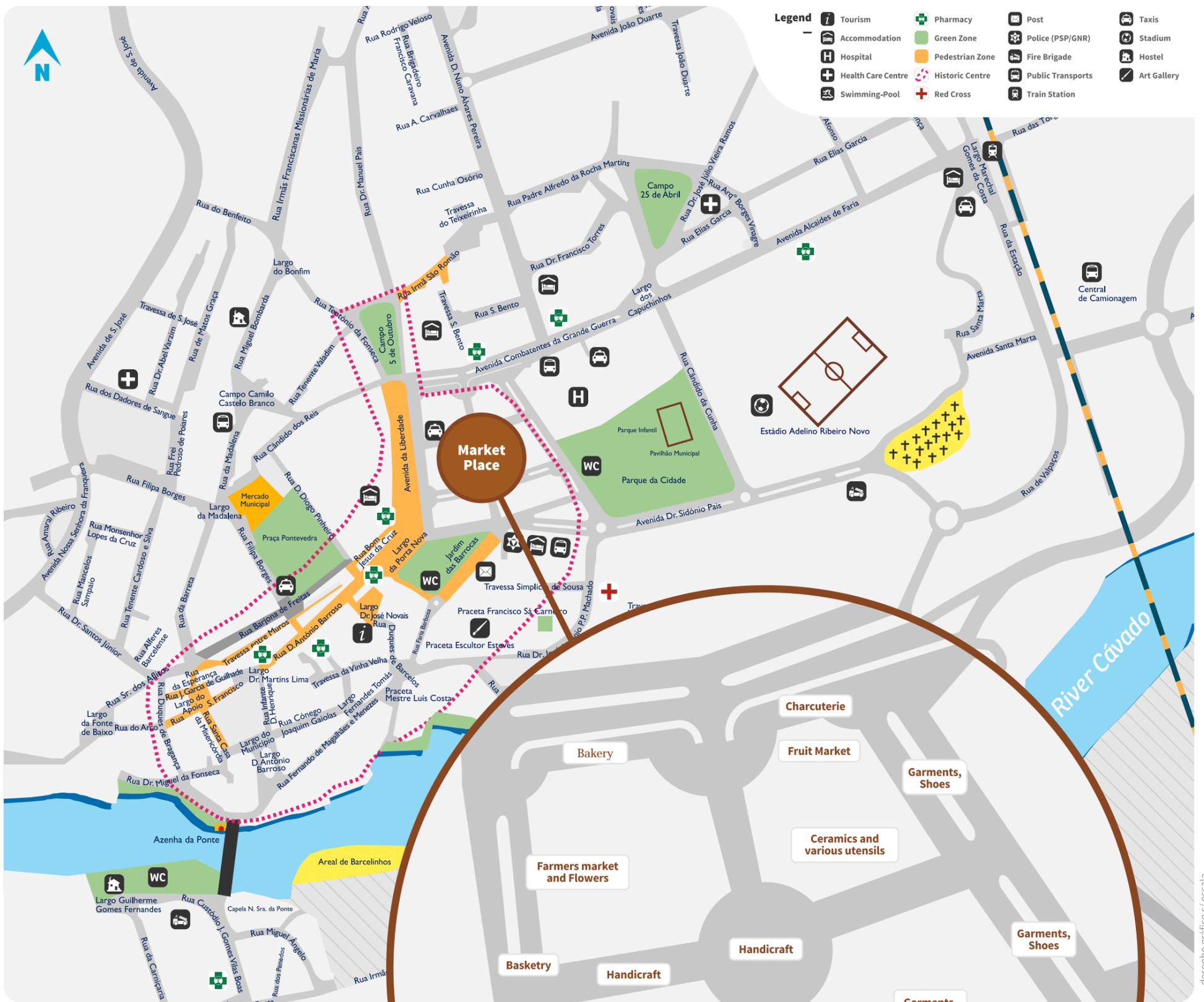
The evolution of the market of Barcelos, by its establishment in location closer to the present market, near the Temple of Bom Jesus da Cruz with a weekly character, on Thursday, should date back to the late 17th or 18th century.

The Market of the 20th and 21st centuries

The market of Barcelos was until the mid-twentieth century an excellent place to promote the famous pottery of Barcelos and a privileged space for numerous potters who are now part of the gallery of the notable masters of the handicraft of Barcelos, such as Rosa Ramalho. The market was an important force for the sustainability, preservation and promotion of the pottery of Barcelos and, later on, of its masters, as well as it also became an event renowned both in Europe and worldwide because of its tourist, cultural and ethnographic attractions. To this fact cannot be dissociated the figurine of the Cock of Barcelos, highly valued during the Estado Novo (authoritarian regime) as a symbol of the national identity, allowing the market to directly benefit from this effect, since it was a highlight point of its promotion.

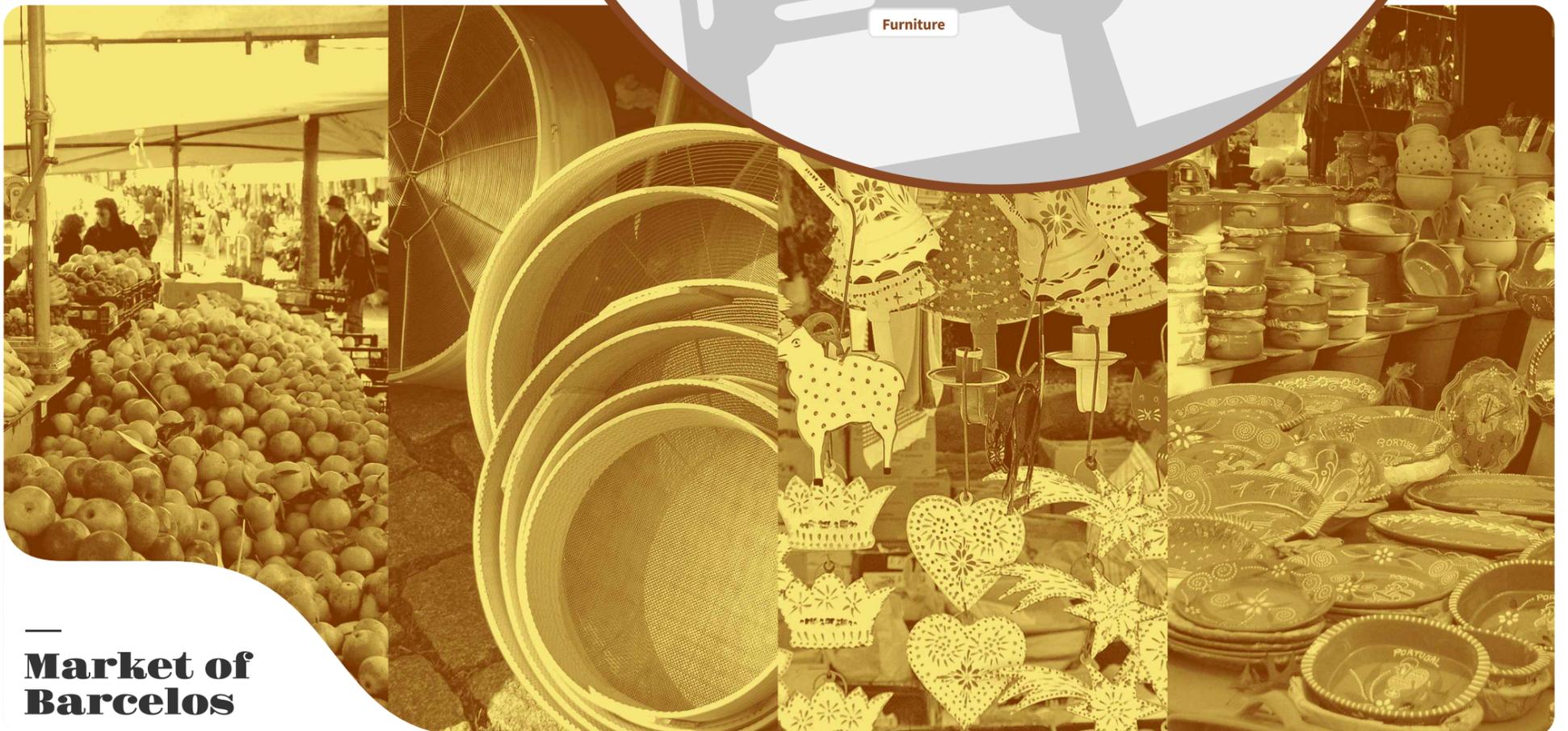
The market underwent an evolutionary process resulting from changes in the consumption habits. However, maintained in its structure the arguments of identity that made it grow and become famous. Thus, must be highlighted the preservation of areas dedicated to the ceramics and to the handicraft traditions of the municipality of Barcelos and an intimate connection to the local rural products. These characteristics make of the market a true "living document", where one can feel the authenticity of the culture of Minho. It is this diversity that makes of the weekly market a unique tourist, cultural and ethnographic event.





Generic Structure of the Market

The market is structured around a polygonal square of 22.153 m² with a superb seventeenth century fountain which forms its centre and roughly divides the market in 4 sectors. The market has a weekly character and lasts all day long.



Market of Barcelos

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