

Welcome To The Algarve



Occupying the extreme south-west of Europe the Algarve is approximately 95 miles long and 30 miles wide, this being about one seventeenth of the total area of Portugal, covering 2000 square miles.

The Algarve is separated from the rest of Portugal to the North by low ranges of mountains. The Guadiana River forms a natural frontier from Spain to the East. This is the largest river in the Algarve, flowing for more than 50 miles from the Serra Do Caldeirao and Serra do Malhoa ranges down to Vila Real on the Atlantic Ocean.

With more than 3000 hours of sunshine a year the climate is pleasant all year round. Hot in July and August with little or no rain, the ocean is warm and there is plenty of activity. March to June is warm with little rain. The countryside being at it's most beautiful at this time of the year, great for walkers and sightseers. September to October is quite warm, can have a little rain and the country may look dry and sparse. November to February is still often sunny and mild, although can be cold at night and can have erratic rain.

Running from Vila Real in the East to Vila do Bispo in the West is the main N125 road, which, although a little unequally, divides the Algarve into two parts. Parallel to the N125 there is the Highway A22. The main population lives south of the road, close to the beautiful coastline. The North side leading into the hills and mountains that separate the next province of Portugal, the Alentejo, providing the Algarve with a natural barrier against the elements of the North.

You will find some of the most beautiful beaches in the Algarve. Sotavento (the leeward) the eastern side, situated between Albufeira and Vila Real de Santo Antonio have long sandy beaches. Barlavento (windward) the Western side, situated between Albufeira and Cape St Vincent is more varied, with some cove beaches only accessible by boat. The coastline is more formidable in the far west at Sagres and Cape St Vincent, having cliffs of over 200 feet. There are many beaches along the Algarve coastline and some you will find almost deserted, even in Summer.

Enjoy days out in the Mountains, along the coast or the Guadiana River.

Following you will find information about what some of the Towns and Villages have to offer, enabling you to get the best out of the Algarve for an enjoyable and fulfilling holiday.



Lagos



Lagos

'The Gateway to the Western Algarve'

Lagos is steeped in history with its centuries old fortress commanding a prominent position at the entrance to the river Bensafirim and the town, watching over the fishermen and their boats.

Once an old slave market town, Lagos still has various markets selling fresh fish, meat and other fresh produce. There is a wide choice of boutiques, potteries and gift shops.

Lagos offers an excellent choice of restaurants and bars, which will tempt you out for lunch, or dinner. You should try bar restaurant O'Galieo or the Italia.



The new Marina, 'Marina de Lagos' and the magnificent promenade straddles the front of this ancient town, along with its flower-decked squares full of character and charm. The beautiful, endless sandy stretch of beach, the 'Meia Praia', is only a few minutes drive away; or take a boat trip from the Ponte da Piedade and explore the magnificent rock formations 'Grottos'.

Worth a visit is the Museu Regional de Lagos (Museum) which contains some fascinating ancient relics, and the beautiful church 'Igreja de San Antonio', having survived the great earthquake in 1755, where you will see ornate gilt, sculptured warriors and cherubs supporting angels. The alter is carved from wood and the lower parts of the wall are covered in 18th century tiles.



Ponta da Piedade

Praia Da Luz



Praia da Luz

A lovely quaint fishing village nestled in it's own coved bay, approximately 6 kms west of Lagos with a wide sandy beach. You can enjoy safe bathing and the excellent water sports facilities.

Luz is small enough for everything to be within walking distance, from the varied choice of restaurants, beach bars and nightlife.

Burgau



Burgau is located 10 minutes drive west of Lagos. Head towards the main Lagos/Sagres road and you will find Burgau.

Burgau is nestled on the edge of a national park.

It is still a working fishing village and watching the boats bobbing on the moonlit waters is a great sight.

Salema



A small typical fishing village, nestled in a deep ravine where local fisherman still work their boats off the beautiful golden sandy beach.

The village has two mini-markets, gift shops and a number of restaurants and bars. With the village being close to the beach you are within easy walking distance to restaurants and bars, whilst still enjoying the village atmosphere

Salema Beach

Figueira

Peaceful and tranquil, Figueira is set amongst the rolling hills and unspoilt countryside, midway between the historic town of Lagos and the rugged grandeur of Cape St Vicent. A peaceful village where city life seems a million miles away and only a short stroll from the secluded beach.

The village boasts three typically Portuguese Restaurants with a bar full of character, along with two mini-markets.

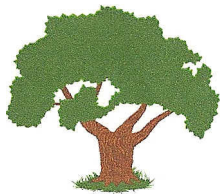


Loulé

Loulé is an ancient walled town where you will find modern buildings wrapped around the ruins of the 13th c. medieval castle. The panoramic view from the battlements of the old castle walls is worth seeing, as is the church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição with its interior of gilded carving and blue and white "azulejos".

A quaint market town well worth a visit where you will find a market held every Saturday. The high point of the year in Loulé is the Carnival held in February.

Silves



Silves is surrounded by countryside, with the orange and lemon groves providing some welcome shade from the sun, a country town originally founded by the Phoenicians.

Take a stroll through the cobbled alley and you will see typical Algarve village life.

Places worth a visit are 13th c. Gothic Cathedral and the lovely Church of Misericórdia.

Sagres

The most South Westerly village in the Algarve. Approximately 30 minutes from Lagos. Sagres has some fine beaches such as Praia do Tomel and the broader Praia da Mareta, as well as a small harbour. The area of Sagres is the Algarve's prime lobster fishing ground.

The village looks across the bay of Sagres, with Atalaia point on one side and Sagres point on the other, to the lighthouse at Cape St Vincent.

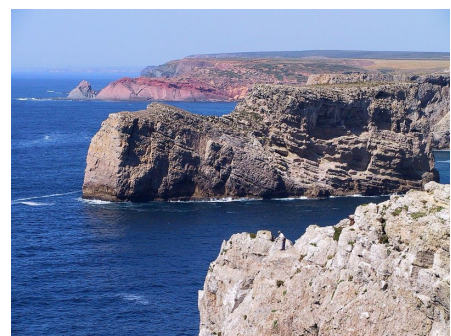
Cape St Vincent

It is the most South Westerly point in Europe and boasts a beautiful crystal lighthouse.

The lighthouse has an outside observation platform to enable visitors to get the best view of all the activity. Some two hundred ships per day pass by, from cargo vessels to super tankers and warships. A climb of seventy-three steps around a spiral staircase will take you to the platform.

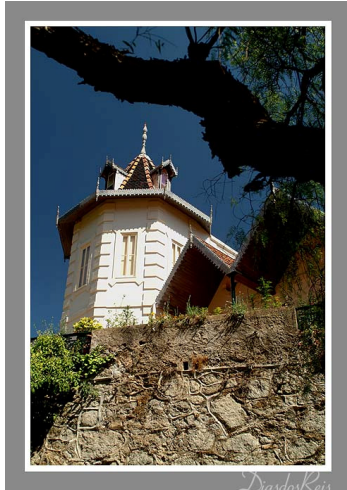
The light was converted to electricity in 1906. Before this time paraffin lamps were used. During the day, visitors are permitted to take a close look at the bulbs and prisms. At three thousand watts the light is visible for up to sixty miles!

There are seven lighthouse keepers who live with their families in the compound, and the popularity of the lighthouse is now such that a souvenir stand has opened at the bottom of the tower!



Monchique

The Monchique Mountains are situated just north of Portimao, and contains the Algarve's highest peak, Foia (900 mts), offering extensive views of the western coastline. At the foothills of Monchique you can view the vast expanse of pine and cork trees, as you climb higher these give way to Eucalyptus plantations.



Monchique is a small market town, which is situated nearly 900 metres up in the Monchique range of mountains. Just to see the fantastic view of the valleys, ravines and the coastline is well worth the visit.

In Monchique, they manufacture charcoal, excellent wooden furniture and wickerwork. They are also famous for their chicken Piri Piri (spicy sauce) and smoked ham (Presunto).

Also in the Monchique Mountains, is Caldas de Monchique, a spa town well known for its spring waters, which is used for the treatment of Rheumatism and chronic illness of the respiratory tract. With its crystal clear streams and gurgling waters, Caldas de Monchique is a must for all nature lovers, and a major point of interest in the region. You will find gift shops selling leather goods, copper and pottery.

Portimao

A visit to the Lagos 1 de Dezembro is well worth a visit. This is a park with benches of blue and white glazed tiles, depicting ten pivotal events in the history of Portugal. It was named after the date 1st December 1640, when Portugal regained its independence from Spain.

Portimao is a popular shopping centre for tourists. It is also noted for its colourful fishing boats in the harbour and for its quayside sardine restaurants, where visitors and locals mingle to savour freshly caught, grilled sardines and thirst quenching Portuguese wines at very reasonable prices!

Portimao was one of the towns to suffer most from the earthquake of 1755. For this reason there are almost no great historical sights or buildings in this region. In the 19th century the town flourished again, mainly due to the fishing and canning industries. Thus Portimao became one of the main Portuguese fishing ports and was raised to the level of a city in 1924.

Today Portimao is a commercial and industrial centre of great importance, connected with fishing and industry.

