

algarve

beach guide

contents

002	aljezur
016	vila do bispo
038	lagos
052	portimão
066	lagoa
086	silves
092	albufeira
116	loulé
128	faro
136	olhão
144	tavira
152	vila real de santo antónio
160	castro marim
166	alcoutim
170	glossary
171	map of the algarve
172	list of species

the algarve's myriad beaches

What could be said about the scores of sandy beaches that have put the Algarve on the tourist map? Certainly nothing that the region's most fervent fans are not already aware of. They experience a constant stream of emotions, awakened by the fine sandy beaches, the scent of the sea air, the greenish-blue colour of the sea, the tiny inhabitants of the rock pools (such as crabs and starfish) and the larger ones in the waters along the shore (such as dolphins), the warm sun flooding the natural landscape with its golden rays and all the vast array of activities on offer at the beach. Holidaymakers are spoiled for choice here. You can go surfing, bodyboarding, water skiing, kitesurfing, parasailing or deep-sea fishing; there are organised boat trips, pedal boats and kayaks; you can play seaside racquet games, build gigantic sandcastles, read a book or simply soak in the refreshing waters of the Atlantic.

All of these activities can be enjoyed on our beaches. And if you're a dedicated beachgoer, you're bound to have tried several, all of them offering safety and excellent services for summer holidaymakers. But being a fan of the Algarve's beaches means more still: it means recognising that they are more inviting than any others for holidays in summer and walking in winter, as an alternative to the uplands of the *serra*. It means recognising that few pleasures are greater than that of spending convivial time on the beach.

Does that sound like you? Then the guide you're holding is the perfect one for you. Because it will let you discover the beaches you haven't been to yet, return to the ones you liked most and create your own list of favourites after stretching out on all of them. You have around 200 km of coastline to choose from, blue flags flying, sea cliffs, bays, caves and rock formations on which to feast your eyes. And, of course, the best beaches in Europe. And while our opinion may be biased, others agree with us: the Algarve has won the prize as the best European beach destination at the World Travel Awards more than once.

More than enough reasons for us to be hugely delighted with what is the region's most important tourism product. So, what are you waiting for? Take a few days off (or why not weeks?) to spend in the Algarve, give yourself over to the holiday spirit of *dolce fare niente* and visit our myriad beaches. We promise that, when you do, you'll find myriad reasons to return.

Desidério Silva
President of the Algarve Tourism Board





aljezur



aljezur

The coastline is essentially rocky, punctuated by noteworthy stretches of sand along the mouths of the main streams, places where fresh and salt water mingle, creating new landscapes and new habitats for different life forms. The deep grey colour of the high, rugged sea cliffs in schist and greywacke contrasts with the pearl-coloured sand of the beaches. The vast coastal plain, moulded by the successive advances and retreats of the sea over geological eras, is exposed and vulnerable to the waves and sea winds, resulting in a vast array of curious rock formations and highly specialised living beings.

The municipality's coastal strip, the Costa Vicentina, is a Nature Park and the natural heritage it shelters is unique. Conditions are excellent for the practice of adventure sports, from surfing to diving and from paragliding to recreational fishing. The Costa Vicentina is also an ideal spot for those who enjoy good fish and seafood. Here they are captured using traditional fishing methods, with barnacle gathering being a particular highlight. In the past, gatherers were known as "Warriors of the Sea". The misty Atlantic coast invites you to explore...



Praia de Odeceixe and Praia das Adegas

📍 37° 26' 28.53" N 8° 47' 52.66" W

📍 37° 26' 19.93" N 8° 48' 1.92" W

The road to the beach winds through a lush green valley, following the course of the Seixe Stream and the farmlands that gradually give way to marshes. Closer to the beach, the cork oaks covering the valley's slopes give way to coastal scrubland, rich in aromatic and melliferous plants whose scents sweeten the air. The whitewashed houses dotting the hillside are essentially summer holiday homes. The beach is a generously-sized strip of sand between the sea and the stream that flows into it at its northernmost tip. Lagoons form here at low tide, a much appreciated spot for peaceful bathing.

Canoes can be hired for a trip upstream, home to animals such as the otter, the grey heron and the colourful kingfisher. The black sea cliffs lining the beach are made of schist with veins of pearl-coloured quartz, their many layers and cracks bringing to mind constructions of Lego. To the south of Praia de Odeceixe lies a small bay called Praia das Adegas, which is an official nudist beach. At high tide, it can be reached by a footpath that descends the cliff next to the viewpoint (a steep trail followed by a wooden staircase).



The current next to the harbour can be very strong, especially when the tide is going out. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Odeceixe (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 3 km. There is organised parking at Praia de Odeceixe and plenty of informal parking at Praia das Adegas. Support infrastructures (restaurants near the beach, information facilities and WC) are available at Praia de Odeceixe, and both beaches have lifeguards on duty during the summer holiday season.





Praia do Vale dos Homens

📍 37° 22' 58.57" N 8° 49' 30.38" W

Situated in the heart of the Vicentine Plain, an extensive area of farmland and pine forests, dotted here and there by deep, verdant gullies, this is a large, peaceful beach. High schist sea cliffs frame the beach, which is reached by a huge wooden staircase. The scent of rockrose is intense and mingles with the sea air as you approach the beach. The huge stretch of sand is almost 500 metres long and is very peaceful.

At the far southern end it is possible to climb several dozen metres up a gully, carved into the rock by a tiny, crystal-clear stream. Thanks to the way the rocks lie in the sea, rock pools form at low tide allowing for peaceful bathing and the opportunity to observe intertidal species such as anemones, limpets, barnacles, gobies, prawns, starfish and many others.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road via Rogil (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 3 km. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures but there is a lifeguard on duty during the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Carriagem

📍 37° 21' 59.12" N 8° 50' 11.77" W

The route to the beach takes you through pine groves and extensive dune fields dotted with pink due to the abundance of spiny thrift, a plant which is typically seen along sandy coasts. The descent to the beach starts at a natural viewpoint overlooking the coastline. A steep trail takes you down the cliff face to a staircase leading on to the sands. Carriagem beach consists of a narrow strip of sand, and the sea cliffs, which have virtually no vegetation other than

the huge century plants that mark the landscape, are clearly crumbling, so it is advisable to visit the beach only at low tide. This stretch of the coast is very rocky and when the waters recede a curious natural amphitheatre, carved in black schist, appears at the northernmost tip of the beach. Very unspoilt, this is an extremely peaceful and almost always deserted beach that tends to be mostly used for fishing.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is via a dirt track from Rogil (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 4 km. There is a small, informal parking area. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Amoreira

Sea Beach - 📍 37° 21' 7.26" N 8° 50' 38.72" W

Riverside - 📍 37° 20' 39.75" N 8° 50' 22.17" W

This beach lies along the mouth of the Aljezur Stream, which forms a modestly-sized estuary of great natural beauty. A large dune field is developing on the northern bank of the stream and making inroads into the valley, thereafter evolving into a marshland habitat typical of such systems, where animals such as otters, grey herons and colourful kingfishers can still be found. Two imposing shapes mark the landscape: to the north, the rugged black schist sea cliff brings to mind a giant lying on the sea;

and to the south, on the verdant slope of the valley, impressive rock formations stand out, vestiges of an ancient and now fossilised dune that shelters plants found nowhere else in the world. The beach is huge and has water on two sides. On the side facing the sea, lagoons form at low tide offering appealing and safe bathing for children, while on the side facing the stream (Amoreira-Rio), the riverside setting affords scenic views of the valley's rocky slopes.

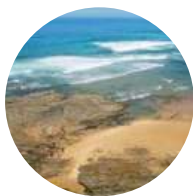


The current next to the harbour can be very strong, especially when the tide is going out. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the walkways and paths. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the northern end of the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the northern entrance to Aljezur (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 7 km. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia do Monte Clérigo

📍 37° 20' 25.30" N 8° 51' 14.53" W

At this beach, a vast stretch of sand heads northward and, to the south, an interesting rocky platform emerges at low tide, revealing the intertidal marine life, such as crabs and starfish in the rock cavities, shoals of young, white sea bream swimming around the rocks, and anemones, sea urchins and gobies in the tidal pools. And you can bathe in some of the larger rock pools, uncovered by the receding tide. Despite being somewhat exposed to the north and east winds, the far ends of the beach are

sheltered by the craggy cliffs and the shapes carved into the rocky walls by the elements are well worth taking a look at. Standing back from the shore, there are imposing dune fields that border a pretty valley carved out by an ephemeral stream. There is a small hamlet at this beach, comprising summer holiday homes and a pine grove with a picnic area. The descent to the beach affords a magnificent, panoramic view of the coastline and the hamlet.



Other rocky beaches to the south can also be visited, but only at low tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the walkways and paths.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the southern entrance to Aljezur (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 7 km. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Arrifana

📍 37° 17' 41.06" N 8° 51' 58.61" W

This beach, where there is a small fishing hamlet, nestles in a pretty shell-shaped bay, which shelters it from the cold wind and waves from the north. Although narrow, the beach stretches for over 700 metres and is framed by imposing, craggy, black schist sea cliffs. If you look to the south, you will see a huge, dark, thin rock sticking up out of the sea. This is called the *Pedra da Agulha* (Needle Rock) and it has become an icon on the Costa Vicentina. At the northern-

most tip of the beach, next to the little fishing harbour, there are good conditions for diving, and this is also a great beach for surfing and bodyboarding. The panoramic view from the Arrifana Fortress (currently in ruins), standing atop the cliff to the north, is breathtaking. At Ponta da Atalaia, famous for its barnacles, traces can still be seen of a Muslim *Ribat*, a convent-fortress of great archaeological value.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the southern entrance to Aljezur (EN 120), heading towards the beach for approximately 8 km. There is plenty of organised parking on the cliff top before the descent to the beach. Vehicle traffic and parking are restricted next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: west / south-west.





Praia do Canal

📍 37° 16' 12.79" N 8° 51' 36.64" W

Lying immediately to the south of Arrifana, Canal Beach affords a fine view of Needle Rock. This is a mostly pebble beach situated at the mouth of a valley carved out by an ephemeral stream, the banks of which have a dense covering of riverine vegetation. The valley opens out next to the sea, widening considerably and becoming very exposed. The vegetation, consisting of endemic scrubland of juniper and plants resistant to sea

spray, forms a carpet-like covering, shaped by the strong winds. The pebbles that manage to escape the reach of the tides are coloured by lichens in warm tones that contrast with the black background of the schist. When the sea is rough, it rolls the pebbles around energetically, producing a cavernous sound. Despite being a favourite with surfers and recreational fishermen, this is a peaceful beach.

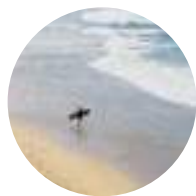


At low tide, a sandbar emerges to the south, stretching all the way to Vale Figueira Beach. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is from Alfambras (an area of scattered dwellings on the EN 120 between Aljezur and Bordeira), heading north-west for approximately 5 km. The dirt track leading to the beach is not signposted and a four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: west.





Praia de Vale Figueiras

📍 37° 14' 50.40" N 8° 52' 6.09" W

The path to the beach follows an enclosed, narrow valley whose slopes are covered with tall, dense scrub consisting of heather, rockrose and strawberry trees. An ephemeral stream runs through the valley to the beach during the rainy months. The beach is huge, both to the north and to the south, and is very peaceful. It is mostly frequented by surfers and recreation-

al fishermen. Here, the schist cliffs are covered with rockrose whose aromatic oils gleam in the sunshine and fill the air with their characteristic scent. As you walk along the beach, you can observe the rocky cliff walls with their tortuous and deformed layers, bearing witness to the incredible forces to which these ancient rocks have been subjected.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is along a tarmacked road from Alfambras (an area of scattered dwellings on the EN 120 between Aljezur and Bordeira), heading towards the beach for approximately 5 km (2.5 km are along a dirt track). There is a medium-sized, informal parking area. There are no support infrastructures but there is a lifeguard on duty during the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Bordeira

📍 37° 11' 50.70" N 8° 54' 11.31" W

At Bordeira Beach, the black schist gives way to a limestone cliff in light, warm colours. The extensive dune system stretches inland from the beach all the way to the hamlet of Carrapateira and along the Bordeira Stream, occasionally forming a lagoon of tepid water close to the mouth, where otters can still be spotted. Also worthy of note are the sand dune systems covered with stone pines. Some of these massive trees are used for farm storage, given the

diameter of their canopies. The beach is enormous, over 3 km in length, and is very exposed to the sea winds. The Bordeira cliffs are famed for their almost inaccessible fishing grounds, much sought-after by the various sea birds that find shelter here. A network of walkways runs alongside part of the bank of the stream up to the viewpoints and down from the cliff top to the sands.



The easiest way to reach the sand is from the car park on the cliff top. A walkway leads down from here to the stream. To reach the beach, you normally need to ford the generally shallow stream. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the walkways and paths.



Road access is by a tarmacked road via the northern entrance to Carrapateira, heading towards the beach for approximately 2.5 km. There is plenty of organised parking before you start up the cliff. At the top of the cliff, there are various medium-sized parking areas. Support infrastructures include a bar, WC and information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia do Amado

📍 37° 10' 2.26" N 8° 54' 8.72" W

Amado is a large beach stretching along three valleys. The warm red and ochre hues of the cliffs dominate to the north; and to the south, the grey of the craggy schist rocks once again comes to the fore. Amado Beach is famed for its versatile, diversified waves that justify the constant presence of on-site surfing schools. It is a frequent venue for national and international competitions in the sport. Despite being a very popular beach, you can still find some peaceful spots if you walk along the sands for a bit.

A network of walkways leads visitors to various parts of the beach and to viewpoints overlooking it. There is road access via the cliff to the north, allowing you to reach Bordeira Beach, passing by the place known as Pontal and the curious fishing harbour at Zimbreira, where the boats are moored on wooden platforms suspended on the cliff. Along the route, there are various stopping points from which you can admire the stunning scenery along this stretch of coast.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the southern entrance to Carrapateira, heading towards Amado for approximately 2 km. Amado can also be reached from the Bordeira Beach car park, heading south along the coastline for approximately 5 km (4 km are along a dirt track). There are large areas of organised parking on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: west / north-west.









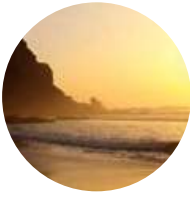
vila do bispo



vila do bispo

A land of contrasts and encounters, this is a key area where the cold and damp of the Atlantic mingles with the warmth and dryness of the Mediterranean. Simultaneously, the sandy, south-western plain meets with the Algarve *Barrocal*, resulting in geological and biological diversity. There are many vestiges of the past; humans have lived here since prehistoric times, possibly due to the existence of veins of silica in the region and to the wealth of marine fauna. The landscape is imposing, inviting you to contemplate its beauty and your connection to the natural world. Sagres would be the key point.

Here, the biophysical and ecological characteristics are unique and we are right in the heart of a Biogenetic Reserve, due to the exceptional nature of the local vegetation. Also noteworthy is the autumn migration of large gliding birds, which brings species such as the griffon vulture and the Egyptian vulture to this coast every year. The choice of beaches is extremely varied. To the west, the beaches swept by the Atlantic winds and waves are framed by steep black cliffs, while the southern coast has gentler cliffs, in warm colours, and many sheltered bays.



Praia da Murração

📍 37° 9' 17.02" N 8° 54' 31.33" W

Already referred to as the “Vicentine Jewel”, this relatively deserted beach boasts magnificent natural beauty. It is one of the rare beaches where the dune vegetation stretches all the way to the tideline, combining the brownish green of the dunes with the blue of the sea. To the north stands a light-coloured, very craggy cliff, covered in endemic juniper scrub and delimiting a small stream that runs on to the sands in the rainy months. In the central part of the beach, the cliff rises tall and imposing, carved

in black schist with reddish and orangey veins. High atop this cliff, lacy, light-coloured carbonate rocks can also be seen, along with an occasional flock of sheep grazing at the edge of the abyss. At the beach’s southernmost tip, a crystal-clear stream has carved its way through the rocky wall and bubbles down to the beach in a waterfall. Rocks in curious shapes and colours can be seen all along the beach, vestiges of ancient rockfalls.



The beach becomes narrow at high tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the paths, rather than walking on the dunes themselves.



Road access is from the EN 120 to the north of Vila do Bispo, next to the Wind Farm, heading towards the sea for 6 km. The dirt track leading to the beach is not signposted and a four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. There is a small, informal parking area on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Barriga

📍 37° 7' 7.38" N 8° 55' 46.76" W

Barriga Beach appears before your eyes as you come out of a tight bend on the road, on the final stretch of a wide, green valley. To reach the beach, you have to cross natural lawns that stretch from the mouth of a small stream and the dunes that surround it. This large beach, sheltered by tall, dark cliffs, is part of a continuous stretch of sand that runs all the way to Castelejo, some 3 km distant. As you walk south at low tide, you can reach Castelejo Beach by

way of Cordoama and observe the rocky cliff walls with their tortuous and deformed layers, bearing witness to the incredible forces to which these rocks have been subjected. On the cliffs, the low-lying vegetation resistant to the sea spray and strong winds replaces the groves of young pine trees that line the access to the beach. This is a very peaceful beach with interesting rock formations at the tideline and lots of nooks and crannies carved into the cliffs.



The beach becomes narrow at high tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Vila do Bispo (Municipal Market), heading towards Castelejo and Cordoama. Following the turn-off to Cordoama, the road is replaced by a dirt track and is not signposted. You need to head towards Barranco Garcia and then continue in a northerly direction for approximately 4 km. There is informal parking on beaten earth along the access track. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Cordoama

📍 37° 6' 32.87" N 8° 56' 11.98" W

This is a huge beach with the sands stretching for as far as the eye can see. The sight of cliff after cliff, each progressively mistier than the last, is breathtaking. Although the beach is home to surfing and bodyboarding schools, there are still peaceful spots to be found along its length. The cliffs here are tall, reaching over 100 metres in height and there is a hill that is not only a natural viewpoint but is also often used by paragliders

as a take-off site. Gleaming white layers can be seen on the north-facing rock walls but they are nothing more than extensive lichen cover. A small stream flows through a gully on to the sands. The scent of rockrose is intense here, mingling with that of the sea breeze, and on the small dunes that form on the beach you can see plants such as European beach grass, sea holly and the eye-catching sea daffodil.



The beach becomes narrow at high tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the paths, rather than walking on the dunes themselves.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Vila do Bispo (Municipal Market), heading towards the beach for approximately 5 km. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia do Castelejo

📍 37° 5' 59.39" N 8° 56' 42.78" W

The road to the beach is winding and follows a deep valley through which a torrential stream twists and turns until it reaches the beach, forming a small patch of damp grass. The verdant slopes are covered with Mediterranean scrub, dotted with stone pines. The cliffs here are tall and dark; Torre de Aspa (a former watchtower) on the cliff to the south stands over 150 m high. To the north, Pedra da Laje is a series of rocks that, offshore, form famous fishing

grounds and, closer to the beach, afford the opportunity to observe intertidal marine life as well as offering calm rock pools for children to bathe in. Undulating dune fields cover the schist cliffs to the north. This is a busy beach in comparison to Barriga and Cordoama, and is a favourite with surfers and bodyboarders. Occasionally, it is covered over by pebbles, which make a cavernous sound as they are rolled around by the waves.



The beach becomes narrow at high tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the paths, rather than walking on the dunes themselves. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Vila do Bispo (Municipal Market), heading towards the beach for approximately 4 km. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth around 150 m from the beach, and a small, organised car park next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: north-west.





Praia da Ponta Ruiva

📍 37° 4' 3.49" N 8° 57' 53.66" W

The beach owes its name to a huge reddish rock sticking up out of the sea at the southernmost end of the beach, next to which a wave forms that is well-known to surfers. The reddish tones of this rock formation contrast strongly with the black of the schist cliffs surrounding the beach. Pedestrian access to the beach is along a trail of medium difficulty that descends the cliff at a spot where the slopes are not so steep. Despite being popular with surfers, the beach remains peaceful and almost devoid of people. There is

an intense scent of rockrose, and you will see endemic juniper scrub, blown flat by persistent, strong winds. The plants growing closer to the beach, such as samphire, are resistant to sea spray. In the rainy months, a small stream cuts its way through the rocky wall of the cliff and on to the beach. On the way to the beach, you will often see African stonechats perched on the upper branches of the bushes, and birds of prey, especially falcons.



The beach becomes narrow at high tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



The beach can be accessed from Sagres (not signposted) and Vila do Bispo (signposted), along approximately 6 km of dirt track. The descent to the beach is particularly difficult and it is recommended that you do not try it unless you have a four-wheel drive vehicle. There is a medium-sized, informal parking area on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: north-west.





Praia do Telheiro

📍 37° 2' 45.25" N 8° 58' 44.04" W

Despite being relatively sheltered from the cold north wind, this is a quiet beach because access is via a steep trail that descends through the tiered limestone cliff to the sand. The surrounding area mostly comprises farmland and pasture, and birds of prey, especially falcons, can often be spotted hunting for food. This is the westernmost beach before you come to Cape St. Vincent and the beauty and diversity of its rock formations can come as a surprise. Their existence is probably connected to the

fact that this is where the dark schist massif that rises along the west coast (an ancient mountain range, very rugged and deformed) meets with the southern sedimentary coast, made up of orange sandstone, reddish Silves sandstone and light-coloured limestone, carved into whimsical shapes. A variety of aromatic plants grow on the limestone tiers of the cliff, and next to the stream that flows on to the beach you can see lush vegetation, including tamarisk and reeds.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Sagres, heading towards Cape St. Vincent (EN 268). After passing Beliche Beach, head towards Torre de Aspa. After approximately 2.5 km of tarmacked road, you follow a dirt track towards the sea for 1 km. There is informal parking on beaten earth about 200 metres from the beach. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: west and south-west.





Praia do Beliche

📍 37° 1' 31.62" N 8° 57' 48.07" W

Situated in a wide bay bounded by Sagres Point and Cape St. Vincent, this beach is sheltered from the prevailing winds. It appears to have been dug out from the high, warmly-coloured cliffs and to reach it you have to go down a huge staircase. As you descend, you can admire the abrupt shape of the steep limestone cliffs, which feature many layers and cracks, caves, and the vestiges of massive rockfalls. When you reach the sand, the diversity of the rock formations sculpted by ero-

sion will once again come as a surprise. The plant communities along this narrow strip of coast are so important to biodiversity that Beliche Beach is situated at the very heart of the Sagres Biogenetic Reserve. You can see some of these endemic plants colonising the limestone pavements on the cliffs. Since it is sheltered from the north wind, this is a very popular beach for both surfing and bodyboarding.

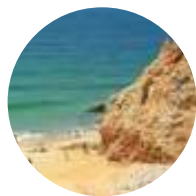


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Sagres, heading towards Cape St. Vincent along the EN 268. There are spacious parking areas close to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Tonel

📍 37° 0' 25.94" N 8° 56' 52.95" W

Although less sheltered than Beliche, this beach is still located within the bay bounded by Sagres Point and Cape St. Vincent. From the beach, you can see the sharp, upright lines of the steep slope of Sagres Point. Sagres Fortress is also visible, a 16th century construction containing a 14th century chapel said to have sheltered the tomb of St. Vincent. And Cape St. Vincent and its lighthouse can also be seen at

the far opposite end of the bay. Pedestrian access to the beach is down a wide ramp carved into the warmly-coloured cliff. As you go down, you can see sharply-marked ravines carved out by rainwater run-off. The sands stretch out in a southerly direction and you can admire the outline of the limestone cliff and the sea-spray-resistant vegetation growing on it, such as samphire and Mediterranean saltbush.

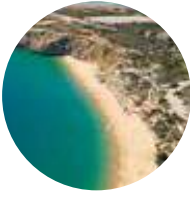


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Sagres, heading towards Sagres Fortress. There is a small, organised car park next to the beach and a large one next to Sagres Fortress, about 300 metres from the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and recreational facilities – a surfing school – and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: west.





Praia da Mareta

📍 37° 0' 19.37" N 8° 56' 24.34" W

This is the first beach on the southern coast and it lies in a bay that begins to the east of Cape St. Vincent, which protects it from the prevailing winds and waves. Mareta Beach's urban setting in the town of Sagres means it is a busy beach and it is appreciated for its calm waters and for being a good setting-off point for canoeing and diving in the bay's underwater caves. It is a large

beach, almost 800 metres long, and is framed by limestone cliffs that rise at either end, with the sharp outline of Cape St. Vincent making its mark on the landscape. Huge caves can be seen in these rock formations, as well as limestone pavements colonised by eye-catching plants such as gold coin daisies. As you walk eastwards, the beach becomes quieter.

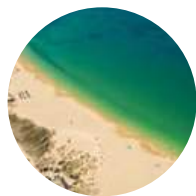


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the far ends of the beach.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car; just follow the signs. There is plenty of parking about 100 to 200 metres from the beach, as well as a small, informal parking area on beaten earth right next to it. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Martinhal and Praia dos Rebolinhos

📍 37° 1' 8.76" N 8° 55' 36.12" W

📍 37° 1' 19.95" N 8° 55' 13.76" W

Martinhal Beach lies to the east of the town of Sagres and, while it still benefits to some extent from the shelter afforded by Baleeira Point, it can be quite windy when the north wind blows through the wide valley in front of the beach. The waters, however, are calm and inviting for windsurfing and diving. Underwater visits to the scenic, limestone islets just off the shore are popular; they are renowned for their underwater caves and marine life. The beach is mostly sandy, with high dunes in the centre and

marshland vegetation extending back into the valley. Only to the east do the cliffs once again mark the landscape. The ruins of an important Roman pottery centre can be found here and, on the islets, vestiges of fish-salting tanks. To the east of Martinhal, lies a small, deserted stretch of sand that can be accessed on foot through the Urbanização do Martinhal development. This is Rebolinhos Beach. Its name is derived from the so-called “rebolinhos”, which are the pebbles that cover it.



Road access is by a tarmacked road through the Urbanização do Martinhal development, heading towards the beach for approximately 2 km. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Martinhal Beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia do Barranco

📍 37° 2' 34.29" N 8° 53' 39.12" W

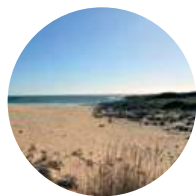
This beach is located at the entrance to one of the region's prettiest valleys, its slopes covered by tall juniper scrub through which imposing limestone formations emerge, as well as a narrow, flat strip of land planted with fruit trees and riverine vegetation. The beach is small and extends back towards the interior of the gully, creating a small dune field to the west of the mouth

of the small stream that flows on to the beach at that spot. As is the case with other beaches along this part of the coast, there are lots of pebbles (called "rebolinhos"), which beachgoers use to build semi-circular shelters that serve as windbreaks. Limestone cliffs in light colours, intensely sculpted by both fresh and saltwater, rise up at either end of the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the hamlet of Raposeira (EN 125), and thereafter along a beaten earth country track for approximately 4 km. The beach is not signposted. There is plenty of informal parking. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Ingrina

📍 37° 2' 48.30" N 8° 52' 44.43" W

As you head towards the beach, take the opportunity to admire the extensive fields of undulating cereal crops and the many megalithic monuments that can be found throughout the area, particularly the menhirs carved out of limestone. As you reach the shore, the farmland gives way to Mediterranean coastal scrub. The shell-shaped beach looks like a little piece of paradise, beckoning you to take a dip in the

bay's generally calm and transparent waters. The bay is delimited by a large platform of limestone pavement (rock which has been deeply carved by erosion) to the west and high, craggy cliffs to the east. This is a great beach for diving as there is an extensive area of fascinating underwater rock formations. Walking along the eastern cliff top is another popular pastime and affords fabulous views over the coastline.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs at the eastern end of the beach. Similarly, if you are walking along the top of the cliffs, you should stay well back from the edge.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the hamlet of Raposeira (EN 125), heading towards the beach for approximately 5 km. There is a medium-sized organised parking area. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia do Zavial

📍 37° 2' 48.96" N 8° 52' 20.46" W

The wooden walkway that leads on to the beach follows the final stretch of a small stream, the riverine vegetation and shingle continuing almost up to the tideline. The sight of a dense eucalyptus grove on the bank of the stream comes as a surprise since it is so close to the sands. The cliff delimiting the beach to the west is tall and imposing, with limestone tiers covered in exuberant coastal scrub that surfers often climb up on

when they want to test the waves. The entrance to the beach consists of quite a large expanse of sand formed by a small dune covered in sand couch-grass near the mouth of the stream. The beach then extends eastwards, bounded by lower, ochre cliffs, their craggy faces offering sheltered nooks for bathers. Zavial is a favourite beach for surfers. The eastern end is quieter.

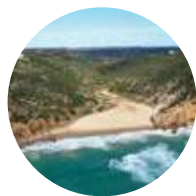


Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the far ends of the beach. Similarly, if you are walking along the top of the cliffs, you should stay well back from the edge.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the hamlet of Raposeira (EN 125), heading towards Zavial for approximately 4 km. There is a medium-sized organised parking area. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia das Furnas

📍 37° 3' 22.33" N 8° 51' 17.09" W

This beach owes its name to the caves carved out in the cliffs that surround it, and which are known locally as "furnas". At this beach, the limestone cliff, in shades of ochre and pink, has been heavily eroded by the effect of rain and sea, giving rise to grottoes, caves and arches, geological formations that are typical of karstic landscapes. The outline of the coast is such that, if you walk eastwards at low tide, you will

discover other beaches and whimsical rock formations. Along the path to the beach, which goes through a valley carved out by a torrential stream, you will also see imposing limestone formations with many fissures and enormous caves. The Mediterranean scrub here grows almost right up to the sands. Dunes covered in undulating European beach grass form in the area around the mouth of the stream.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the eastern end of the beach.



Road access is via a tarmacked road (and then a dirt track for approximately 1.5 km) from the hamlet of Figueira (signposted on the EN 125), heading towards the beach for approximately 2.5 km. There is a medium-sized, informal parking area on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Figueira

📍 37° 3' 40.72" N 8° 50' 22.41" W

At Figueira, cars have to park about 800 metres from the beach and pedestrian access is along a narrow trail through one of the prettiest valleys along this coast. The verdant slopes, covered in Mediterranean scrub and pine groves are punctuated by imposing limestone rock formations in which caves can be seen. Orchards consisting mainly of fig and olive trees, populated by an abundance of birds feeding on the fruit, can be seen along the strip of flat land beside the

small stream. The beach is very peaceful and is somewhat reminiscent of the end of the world, possibly because of the absence of vehicles. The beach is bounded by very curiously-shaped, warmly-coloured cliffs and to the east you will spot the ruins of a 16th century fortification. Here, too, the pebbles are used by beachgoers to build semi-circular shelters that serve as windbreaks. This is a quiet beach that not many people go to.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the hamlet of Figueira (signposted on the EN 125), heading towards the beach for approximately 1 km. There is a small, informal parking area 800 metres from the beach. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south.





Praia da Salema

📍 37° 3' 54.80" N 8° 49' 27.28" W

This beach is in the small fishing town of Salema and also serves as a fishing harbour, the central part being occupied by the fishing boats and respective equipment, such as buckets and fish hooks. You can also watch the fishing boats coming in to land their catch and, later on, sample the octopus, eel and white sea bream at the various restaurants around the town. The ruins of a Roman villa and a fish conserving factory attest to Salema's long fishing tradition. There

is a pleasant beachside promenade with some open-air cafés and restaurants overlooking the sea. Stretching for over a kilometre in length, it is a large beach that becomes quieter as you walk farther to the east, and is bounded by very rugged ochre cliffs. On these rocky walls you can see footprints of the carnivorous bipedal dinosaurs that roamed this region around 140 million years ago.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the far ends of the beach.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through the town of Salema (signposted on the EN 125). There are medium-sized organised car parks next to the beach and on the cliff top to the west (access to the beach is down a wooden staircase). The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south / south-east.





Praia da Boca do Rio

📍 37° 3' 59.20" N 8° 48' 30.42" W

Two streams flow into each other at this quiet beach, one coming from a large valley where there is a large floodplain that is currently used for farming. In the immediate vicinity of the beach, you can see hydraulic devices that bear witness to the ancient human presence at the site. In bygone days, Boca do Rio was an important Roman villa. Today, traces can still be seen of frescoes and mosaics, bathhouses, warehouses and a fish salting and conserving factory,

with two associated cemeteries, suggesting that there could have been a fishing port here. On the cliffs to the east (Ponta da Almádena), you can visit the Almádena Fortress and admire the breathtaking panoramic view over the coast. A small lagoon area usually forms at the mouth of the stream that flows on to the beach. If you follow its course upstream you will very possibly spot otters or traces of them.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Salema or Burgau (both signposted on the EN 125), or from Budens (EN 125) heading towards the beach. There is plenty of parking on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Near the beach, you will find a picnic area in a eucalyptus grove. Orientation: south.





Praia de Cabanas Velhas (Almádena)

📍 37° 3' 57.00" N 8° 47' 43.21" W

This is a welcoming beach and although it is bigger than Boca do Rio it becomes narrow at high tide, bounded by very rugged and craggy limestone cliffs. The sands extend towards the east and are delimited at the far end by a pontoon that is a very popular spot for fishing. Here, too, the abundant pebbles are used by beachgoers to build semi-circular shelters that serve as windbreaks. The slopes overlooking the beach are covered in scrub that is typical

of rocky coasts and there is a pine grove on the western slope. It is worth taking the winding coastal path between Cabanas Velhas and Boca do Rio, which affords a fabulous view over the deep blue ocean, framed by the dense green Mediterranean vegetation. Pause at the Almádena Fortress, a fortified structure built in the 17th century to protect tuna fishing from North-African pirate attacks.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the hamlet of Burgau heading towards the beach for approximately 2.5 km. There is a medium-sized, informal parking area on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Burgau

📍 37° 4' 18.39" N 8° 46' 30.25" W

Situated within the village of Burgau, this is a town beach that marks the western boundary of the Southwest Alentejo and Costa Vicentina Nature Park. The sands stretch along a small bay, sheltered from inclement weather, and which serves as a fishing port. Here, fishing is still carried on in the traditional way using equipment such as buckets, dragnets and fish hooks. As is the case in Salema, here too you can watch the boats landing their catch and sample the fresh

fish later on in the village restaurants. Beachgoers therefore share the sands with the fishing boats and the fishermen's equipment. To the east, the landscape is marked by the greyish limestone and marl cliff, deeply gouged by running water. The orientation of the beach and the position of the cliffs provide shelter from the prevailing winds, resulting in calm seas for bathing.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the far ends of the beach.



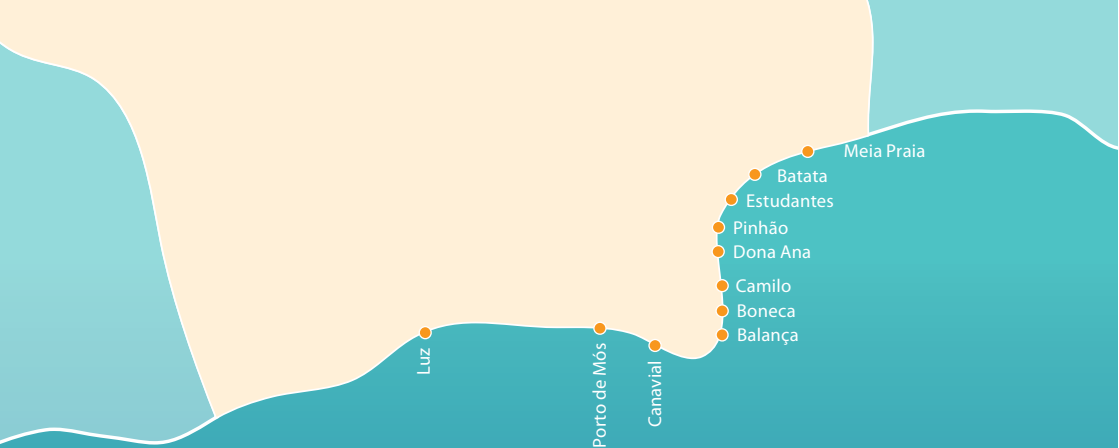
The beach can be accessed on foot and tarmacked road through the village of Burgau (signposted on the EN 125). There are small, organised car parking facilities next to the beach. The support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.







lagos



lagos

Lagos is replete with history and tradition and is simultaneously one of the Algarve's most cosmopolitan cities, a place where people from all over have been living together in harmony for many, many years. This blend of traditions and customs has resulted in a year-round social and cultural life that is as dynamic as it diversified. Alongside tourism, other ways of life in the region include fishing, honey and *medronho* production and regional confectionery, such as the renowned *D. Rodrigo*. Artisans work with raw materials such as wood, stone, iron and palm leaves from the dwarf fan palm, Europe's

only native palm tree. All these products, the fruit of ancient know-how, can be found in the picturesque traditional shops. But the *Costa de Ouro* or Gold Coast, as it is known because of the ochre and golden tones of the cliffs, is also one of the reasons for Lagos being such a privileged municipality. Ponta da Piedade, the promontory that shelters the city of Lagos, has lots of welcoming bays surrounded by caves, natural arches and crystal-clear waters where you can make out the outline of submerged rocks. The stunning scenery is an invitation to explore, both on land and at sea.



Praia da Luz

📍 37° 5' 13.28" N 8° 43' 35.09" W

This beach is situated in a very cosmopolitan summer holiday resort that used to be a major fishing town, especially from the 13th to the 16th century. The seafront promenade with its Portuguese crazy paving offers sunny open-air cafés and restaurants and lots of entertainment during the summer. To the west, the promenade lined by large palm trees goes right up to the walls of the fortress that was originally built to protect Luz Church from North-African pirate attacks. On the beach, at the base of the walls, an extensive rocky platform, in warm colours and deeply eroded

by the sea, contains marine fossils and some intertidal marine life such as anemones, limpets, whelks and colourful seaweed. To the east, stands the limestone and marl cliff, deeply gouged by running water. This whitish cliff is marked by a very dark rock formation that stands out against the landscape: it is the so-called Black Rock, a volcanic vein that extends from the Monchique Mountains to the sea. The calm waters of the bay mean it is an ideal spot for water sports such as windsurfing, kitesurfing, canoeing and diving.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the eastern end of the beach.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through the village of Luz (signposted on the EN 125). There are small, organised car parking areas next to the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south / south-east.





Praia do Porto de Mós

📍 37° 5' 7.89" N 8° 41' 1 8.04" W

Lying in an ample, open valley, this is a large beach framed at either end by high cliffs. The Atalaia Viewpoint, at the top of the western cliff, affords a superbly scenic view of the coast all the way to Sagres. To the west, the prevailing colours are light greys, the much laminated, precariously-balanced cliffs being made of marl (limestone with a high clay content). A thick layer of clay collects at the base of the cliff in the rainy months, which the locals say has me-

dicinal properties. Plants such as Mediterranean saltbush, saltwort and shrubby sea-blite, which are well-adapted to sea spray, grow on the cliff face, while reeds grow in the spots where there are signs of running water. The cliffs to the east are in warm tones of ochre and you can catch a glimpse of the rock formations that make up Ponta da Piedade. Despite being so close to the city of Lagos, there are some very quiet spots along the beach, particularly at the far ends.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Access is by tarmacked road from Lagos, following the signs for “praías” (beaches) and “praia acessível” (accessible beach) and then heading towards Porto de Mós. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia do Canavial

📍 37° 5' 3.04" N 8° 40' 46.48" W

This is a narrow, isolated and peaceful beach that lies immediately to the east of Porto de Mós and is framed by scenic cliffs. The beach takes its name from the dense reed plantation growing in proximity to a torrential stream that cascades down the cliff face in the rainy months. Access to the beach is along a pedestrian trail that runs along the cliff top, where the rich undergrowth of the Algarve's *Barrocal* is gradually taking over what used to be fig orchards. The winding narrow trail descends to the beach by means of

steps carved into the cliff face, where the dominant colours are very intense ochres and reds. The carbonate rock walls are deeply eroded and fissured as a result of rainwater. Plants typical of such harsh environments, such as turquoise tails sedum, gold coin daisies, sweet alyssum and statice, can be seen growing in the small cavities that form in the rock. Curiously-shaped submerged rock formations can be seen in the transparent waters.



The beach is narrow and you should only go there at low tide. Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Access is on foot (small trail) along the cliff top from the street called Rua do Canavial, which is located about 650 m to the east of Porto de Mós Beach, along the Porto de Mós road. There is very limited parking on Rua do Canavial. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south.





Praia da Balança and Praia da Boneca

📍 37° 4' 58.17" N 8° 40' 6.15" W

📍 37° 5' 3.58" N 8° 40' 2.93" W

These small sandy bays lie at the eastern side of the very craggy Ponta da Piedade promontory. The relief here is remarkably diverse as a result of the effects of erosion on the carbonate rocks: rocky ledges, sinkholes, arches, caves and many rocky inlets. This part of the coastline is known as the *Costa de Ouro* or Golden Coast due to the intense ochre tone of the cliffs. Boat trips set off from the bay next to the Ponta da Piedade lighthouse and from Lagos, giving you the opportunity to admire the outline of the coast and reach some of the sandy beaches nestling at the foot of the high, craggy cliffs.

The rock formations close to these beaches take on all sorts of weird and wonderful shapes (like a set of kitchen scales or the body of a woman), as a result of which the beaches have been given names such as *Balança* (Scales) and *Boneca* (Doll). There are countless marine fossils in the cliffs above the beaches, and many large Mediterranean saltbush plants, which are well-adapted to the sea spray. A snorkelling outing in these tranquil bays offers a different, surprising and very colourful view of the marine environment.

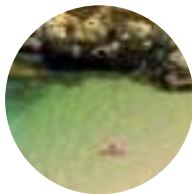


The beaches are narrow and you should only go there at low tide. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



The best way to get there is by boat from either Lagos or Ponta da Piedade. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-east.





Praia do Camilo

📍 37° 5' 14.37" N 8° 40' 7.19" W

The open-air seating area on the cliff top affords a fabulous panoramic view over the coastline between Lagos and Albufeira and a sweeping perspective of the ocean dotted with the white triangles of yachts. A long wooden staircase leads down to the beach through an area of scrub containing plants typical of the Algarve's *Barrocal*: Kermes oak, mastic trees, cistus and white-leaved rockrose. The plants growing on the cliff face, which is more exposed to the sea, are mostly species that are well adapted to sea spray, particularly Mediterranean saltbush and

saltwort. A huge rock formation divides the beach; you can cross it through a narrow, damp tunnel that was dug out by hand. The rich ochre tones and the lacy appearance of the craggy calcarenite cliffs are impressive both here and on the rock formations that delimit Camilo Beach. The relief is typical of karstic formations, consisting of rocky ledges, arches and caves. The platforms on the rocky ledges, inaccessible to predators, attract countless sea birds, and you will often see great cormorants, herring gulls and black-headed gulls.

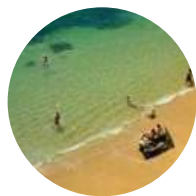


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Access is by tarmacked road from Lagos, following the signs for "praias" (beaches) and Ponta da Piedade. Praia do Camilo is signposted. Small organised car parking is available. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: east.





Praia Dona Ana

📍 37° 5' 30.27" N 8° 40' 9.55" W

Before you start heading down to the beach, it is worth spending a moment at the small viewpoint to admire the view of coastline and the curious rock formations – rocky ledges, sinkholes and caves – that have been carved out by the fresh and salt water. You will see countless white dots gleaming on the scattered rocky ledges along the horizon: herring gulls, herons and black-headed gulls, perching on these platforms overlooking the sea. Plants that are especially adapted to sea spray, such as saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush, line

the rocky walls. D. Ana Beach is divided into a number of sandy inlets due to the outline of the cliff, offering sheltered spots for bathers. In the sea itself, a snorkelling expedition will allow you to discover a world of different colours: seaweed, anemones, starfish, sea urchins, prawns and shoals of little fish inhabit the submersed rocks. D. Ana is a well-known and very popular beach and has already been considered as one of the best in the world by the specialist press.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Access is by tarmacked road from Lagos, following the signs for “praia” (beaches) and Ponta da Piedade. The beach is signposted. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia do Pinhão

📍 37° 5' 39.83" N 8° 40' 5.37" W

This beach can be reached by means of a pedestrian trail that sets off from D. Ana Beach and goes along the cliff top for about 300 metres. Here, you can observe some of the coastline's typical vegetation: gold coin daisies, sweet alyssum, Mediterranean saltbush and saltwort grow in abundance in the rocky cavities. Farther back from the shore, you will mostly find typical scrubland species, such as mastic trees and wild olives. The beach is divided by a rock formation with arches and caves. It is a

small beach, framed by high carbonate rock cliffs in warm colours. At the smaller, northern section of the beach, there is a viewpoint with a staircase leading down to the sea, meaning that, at high tide, you can dive straight into the sea without having to go on the beach. An extensive area of submerged rocks beckons you for an underwater expedition. Although quite close to the built-up area around Lagos, this is a relatively quiet beach.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. You should be aware that a large part of the beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



The beach can be accessed on foot from D. Ana Beach, heading north. There is foot and vehicle access on a tarmacked road, setting off from Lagos, up the Avenida dos Descobrimentos and heading towards Pinhão Beach. Road traffic and parking are extremely difficult in the vicinity of the beach. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: east.





Praia dos Estudantes

📍 37° 5' 47.74" N 8° 40' 4.01" W

The cliffs are a bit lower at this beach and are covered with reeds, indicating the existence of fresh water. Typical cliff plants are abundant too, especially saltwort, Mediterranean salt-bush and shrubby sea-blite, species adapted to the sea spray and which also thrive in the saline soils of the marshes. The beach is sheltered by rock formations that extend into the sea, keeping it calm for bathing. Tunnels have been dug through these cliffs by hand; one of them, to the south, gives access to a small bay

where a curious arch-shaped passage has been built to connect a rocky ledge to the shore; and another, to the north, connects Praia dos Estudantes to the neighbouring Praia da Batata. The southern tunnel has been severely eroded by the sea and you can see characteristic intertidal organisms such as mussels, limpets, barnacles, whelks, anemones, prawns and colourful seaweed. The atmosphere inside the tunnels is damp and salt-laden, and there is a very strong smell of the sea air.

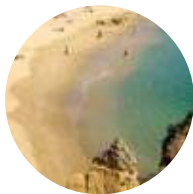


Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care whenever you are close to the tunnels that have been dug in the rocky walls.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car from the Avenida dos Descobrimentos in Lagos. There are small, organised parking areas next to the beach. Tourist facilities include a restaurant and WC on the cliff top. There is no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: east.





Praia da Batata

📍 37° 5' 52.01" N 8° 40' 6.40" W

This beach is located between Praia dos Estuantes and the southern jetty on the Bensafrim Stream, a very short distance from the historical centre of Lagos. Clearly a town beach, a sunny, paved square has been built into a large part of the cliff behind it. Beyond the jetty are the tiny Solaria Beach and the Ponta da Bandeira Fortress, right by the entrance to the harbour. The beach has lots of inlets and nooks that are shel-

tered from the prevailing winds, as you would expect from the craggy outline of the Golden Coast's ochre cliffs, greatly eroded by the elements. This is quite a busy beach, as it continues on from Lagos's long seafront promenade that follows the mouth of the Bensafrim Stream and the bright colours of the yachts in the marina and the traditional fishing boats in the fishing harbour.

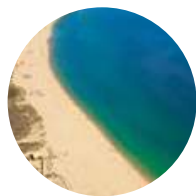


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car from the Avenida dos Descobrimentos in Lagos. There are small, organised parking areas next to the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: east.





Meia Praia

📍 37° 6' 38.50" N 8° 39' 34.83" W

The beach at Meia Praia follows the ample bay of Lagos, starting next to the northern jetty on the Bensafrim Stream and stretching for over 5 km to the western jetty on the Ria de Alvor. To the west, the city of Lagos and the Ponta da Piedade, stretching into the sea, are still visible. The horizon opens out here, between the ample line of the ocean, the low dunes on the beach and the gentle, verdant hills that stretch back inland, covered in pine groves and *barrocal* scrubland, and punctuated by carob and olive trees. A network of raised walkways criss-

crosses the dunes, protecting the vegetation, which is very thick at the seashore and which includes plants such as sand couch-grass, European beach grass, sea holly, Cretan trefoil and sea daffodils. This being the municipality's only essentially sandy beach, and also due to its size, water and beach sports are very popular here and include windsurfing, kitesurfing, sailing, beach volleyball, beach soccer and more. And a good bit out to sea, you can try your hand at deep-sea fishing.



In order to preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the raised walkways and passing places.



Access is by a tarmacked road from Lagos, heading towards the marina. Meia Praia is signposted. There is plenty of parking, some of it organised. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.









portimão



Alvor
Alvor Nascente (Três Irmãos)
Praia
Barranco das Canas (Alémão)
Vau
Careanos
Amado
Três Castelos
Rocha
Marina



portimão

The municipality's seafront stretches between two important areas of wetlands: the Ria de Alvor (Alvor Estuary) to the west and the Rio Arade (River Arade) to the east. At both sites, the rocky, wave-beaten coast gives way to calm waters and banks of fine sand and silt. In the Alvor Estuary, a recognised wildlife sanctuary, you can admire the tranquil lifestyle of those who live off the sea's riches: fish and shellfish farming and traditional fishing still provide sustenance for the local communities. In turn, the River Arade was once a vital route connecting the coast with the interior, allowing the transport of essential merchandise, such as cork, as well as

being the site of the Algarve's most important fishing port. Nowadays, the river is mostly sailed by fishermen and tour operators and is one of the municipality's tourist attractions. Portimão's greatest attraction, however, is essentially the scenery along its intensely colourful and deeply-eroded rocky coast that shelters welcoming golden sandy beaches. The varied range of shopping and accommodation, and the support facilities for water sports such as surfing, sailing, diving and deep-sea fishing, enhance the value of the municipality's beaches, making this an attractive tourist destination.



Praia do Alvor Poente

📍 37° 7' 22.50" N 8° 35' 57.62" W

This beach is located in the wide bay of Lagos, on a sandy peninsula that extends for over 3.5 km to the east of the harbour at the Alvor Estuary. Thanks to the sand barriers in the estuary, there is an inland lagoon with areas of marshes and channels of calm waters. This habitat is a sanctuary for countless species of aquatic birds that either live here year round or are merely passing through. Many species of fish and molluscs also breed here (including shellfish, cuttlefish and octopus), which are of great value to the local economy. The sand barrier is vast and stretches

for as far as the eye can see. Along the seafront you can see delicate plants such as sand couch-grass, European beach grass, cottonweed, Cretan trefoil and sea daffodils. Despite being hot and dry, the dunes shelter various species of birds, micromammals, reptiles and many insects. Inland, the sands gradually give way to the marshes and the lagoon, where yachts and traditional fishing boats are anchored, and on whose banks stands the picturesque fishing town of Alvor.



Conservation work was carried out on the Alvor dune system and it now has a network of walkways and footpaths that are helping to protect the dune system as well as providing access to the beaches and to the jetty. A nature trail, accessible to those with reduced mobility, features stopping points and viewpoints that allow you to observe the estuary's typical environments: the dunes and the marshes.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through the village of Alvor (signposted on the EN 125). The beach is signposted as "Praia Acessível" (Accessible Beach). There is plenty of organised parking next to both the beach and the harbour storage buildings (north entrance to the Alvor nature trail). The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are life-guards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia do Alvor Nascente (Três Irmãos)

📍 37° 7' 12.69" N 8° 34' 56.69" W

Located to the east of the estuary, this beach still enjoys the benefits of being close to the typical town of Alvor, the open landscape over the bay and extensive dune system, although the region's tourist complexes are gradually beginning to surround it. Thus, on the seafront, you will still be able to see the highly adapted sand-living plants, especially sand couch-grass, Cretan trefoil and the eye-catching sea daffodil. At the far eastern end of the bay, the deeply-eroded carbonate cliffs, typical of the western

Algarve, are already making their appearance. Some rocky ledges can be seen, extending into the sea, and the rock formation of Ponta João de Arens is also visible. At low tide, it is possible to walk along the little bays to the east, and observe how the beach seems to be cut out of the intricately lacy cliffs, with their small caves and precariously balanced boulders. Indeed, for this very reason, you are advised to be very careful when you are near the rock formations.



Try to stay on the walkways and established trails in order to help preserve the dune system, especially in the Torralta sector. In the eastern sector, (Três Irmãos), and given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the village of Alvor (signposted on the EN 125), heading towards Torralta / Praias (beaches). There is plenty of organised parking next to Torralta and plenty of informal parking on beaten earth at the far eastern end of the beach (Três Irmãos). The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Prainha

📍 37° 7' 6.40" N 8° 34' 43.43" W

Prainha is a small, shell-shaped beach framed by scenic rock formations that are deeply eroded due to the action of both fresh and salt water. Other beaches follow on from Prainha in an easterly direction, some accessible only at low tide, and you will see plenty of the typical features of these cliffs: arches, caves, rocky ledges and sinkholes. You are advised to be cautious when exploring the nooks and crannies among

the rock formations, since falling stones are common. These same rocks shelter a wealth of colourful underwater marine life and these bays are excellent spots for diving. The craggy, ochre, bio-calcarene cliffs (rich in marine fossils) form what is known as Ponta João d'Arenas, a favourite spot from which to contemplate the coastline and for those who want to see the coast's typical fauna and flora.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since it lies entirely within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Pedestrian access is through the easternmost end of Três Irmãos Beach, via a wooden ramp that leads up from the sand and is accessible at low tide. You can also access Prainha through the Prainha Club Holiday Village (on the M531 road between Alvor and Portimão) following the signs to Prainha and the "Caniço" Restaurant. There is a lift down the cliff (to the west) and a stone staircase (to the east). There is organised but limited parking in the holiday village. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia do Barranco das Canas (Alemão)

📍 37° 7' 11.30" N 8° 33' 50.83" W

This beach owes its name to the stream that flows on to the sand and is lined by a thick reed plantation. The João d'Arens rock formation bounds the beach to the west, its countless rocky ledges stubbornly standing firm against the receding of the coastline and sheltering many species of sea birds. This is the first beach to the east of the promontory and it is very sheltered on windy days. Framing the beach is a succession of intensely-coloured cliffs of various forms, ochre limestone rock formations

which have been eroded to form arches and caves, and soft, reddish, deeply-gullied formations of sand and clay. It is a quiet beach in a still very unspoiled setting, despite its proximity to such a major urban and tourist centre as Portimão. From the car park, you can access a footpath that takes you along the cliff tops of this promontory almost as far as Prainha, amid coastal scrub and a thick, green patch of pine trees.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the M 531, heading towards Vau and turning south next to the Urbanização Encosta do Vau. Support infrastructures include information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia do Vau

📍 37° 7' 12.06" N 8° 33' 32.91" W

The reddish and ochre cliffs that mark the far ends of the beach become gradually lower in height towards the centre, where there is a break between them. Inland, there are various tourist facilities and the built-up areas of Vau with their gardens. Much of the vegetation around the beach is exotic (century plants, ice plants and cacti) having been introduced in an effort to stabilise these cliffs, which are extremely vulnerable to contact with water, whether from rainfall or the sea. At the edge of the sands,

however, towards Barranco das Canas and Praia dos Careanos, the cliff rises and is covered with typical vegetation, especially saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush, species that are resistant to salt-filled sea winds. The deeply-eroded rocky walls form nooks and crannies that delight beachgoers. There are stunning views over the coast from the cliffs surrounding the beach, particularly João d'Arens, and you can observe the karstic features of the rock formations.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the M 531, heading towards Vau. There is plenty of organised parking. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south / south-west.





Praia dos Careanos

📍 37° 7' 8.90" N 8° 33' 17.79" W

This beach lies next to Vau in the stretch of coast that precedes Praia da Rocha and includes Careanos, Amado and Três Castelos, an expanse of sand that stretches for over a kilometre. This stretch of beach is backed by a continuous line of high cliffs in alternating tones of red and ochre, bearing witness to the different types of stone that make them up: sand and clay rocks that are soft and bright red in colour alternate with bio-calcareenite rocks that are lighter in colour and more resistant, and contain an abundance of sea fossils. To get to the

sandy Careanos beach, you have to go down a steep staircase that appears to finish in the remains of a sinkhole. The beach is dotted with a succession of caves and rocky inlets. Of particular note, at the eastern end of the beach, are some large sinkholes and a rocky ledge reminiscent of a small fortress. Between Careanos and Amado, you can follow a properly tended trail along the cliff top, allowing you to enjoy the fabulous rocky landscapes along this part of the coast.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Access is via the tarmacked coast road connecting Vau to the city of Portimão, heading towards Praia da Rocha. There is a medium-sized organised parking area. The support infrastructures include information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Amado

📍 37° 7' 6.68" N 8° 33' 2.98" W

Praia do Amado lies between Careanos and Três Castelos, framed by the cliffs typical of this stretch of the coast. The colours alternate between bright red and ochre, and the different features and rocky reliefs seem like something from a fantasy world. Access to the sand is down a steep staircase in the cliff face, lined by dense vegetation that is well-adapted to saline environments: saltwort, Mediterranean saltbush, sweet alyssum and gold coin daisies. Down on the beach, in the sand that accumulates at the base of the cliffs, you will find an abundance of

Cretan trefoil and sand couch-grass, making up mini dune fields. An attractive pedestrian and cycle route runs along the cliff top between this beach and the view point at Três Castelos, which marks the boundary between Praia dos Três Castelos and Praia da Rocha. There are stopping points along the route, gardens and an area with open-air cafés, allowing you to take the best possible advantage of the sunshine and panoramic views from these cliffs overlooking the sea.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Access is via the tarmacked coast road connecting Vau to the city of Portimão, heading towards Praia da Rocha, or via the Avenida das Comunidades Lusíadas (Portimão). There is a medium-sized organised parking area at the western entrance to the beach and a larger area at the eastern end, incorporated into the pedestrian and cycle route. The support infrastructures include information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia dos Três Castelos

📍 37° 7' 2.10" N 8° 32' 39.99" W

The beach, whose name refers to the rocky ledges that are stubbornly standing firm in the face of the receding coastline, lies next to the promontory where the Três Castelos viewpoint is located. One of the accesses to the beach is via the staircase leading down from the viewpoint. It affords a splendid view over the very craggy rock formations on this beach, where you can see arches, caves and rocky ledges that birds such as falcons, herring gulls, black-headed gulls, pigeons and swifts find extremely appealing. On the gentler slopes, you will see

mastic trees and plants that are resistant to sea spray, especially saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush. At the base of the cliffs, the roots of these plants serve as host to a small, very rare parasitic plant with a suggestive common name (*piça-de-mouro*) that alludes to its phallic appearance and its restricted geographical distribution (it is only found in the Mediterranean Basin). The colours here are mostly warm and there are some quieter sections on this long beach as you head westwards.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Pedestrian access is via the city of Portimão and along the cycle route connecting Amado to the viewpoint (Miradouro). Road access is from the Avenida das Comunidades Lusíadas (Portimão), heading towards Praia da Rocha / Miradouro (viewpoint). There is plenty of organised parking around 150 m from the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Rocha

📍 37° 7' 2.93" N 8° 32' 10.46" W

The huge beach stretching for over a kilometre and sheltered by attractive, craggy cliffs in warm colours is the reason why Rocha Beach is one of the best-known beaches in Portugal and a top choice among summer holiday makers. Practically the whole beach is criss-crossed by walkways, alongside which there are many different support infrastructures for beachgoers, including a sports area. Up on the seafront avenue, there is a succession of hotels, bars, open-air cafés, discos and a casino, all eventually leading up to Portimão Marina and providing an

array of tourist activities that bring added colour and complement the entertainment on the beach. There are two elevated viewpoints at the far ends of the beach, Três Castelos to the west and the Santa Catarina Fortress at the entrance to the harbour on the River Arade. Both afford fabulous panoramic views over the coastline between Ponta João d'Arens and Ponta do Altar. Despite the fact that this is a busy town beach popular with tourists, Rocha is so impressive and beautiful that its natural scenery still seems to come to the fore.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through Portimão, following the signs for Rocha. There are small, organised parking areas along the Avenida Tomás Cabreira, and larger ones, also organised, at the far ends of the beach (at Três Castelos viewpoint to the west and Portimão Marina to the east). The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Marina

📍 37° 6' 54.92" N 8° 31' 42.25" W

This is a small beach with calm waters, located in the heart of the River Arade Estuary, and separated from Praia da Rocha by the western jetty of the river's harbour. The beach is framed by lines of palm trees and appealing open-air cafés that spill on to the sands, offering an interesting variety of leisure areas. Access to the beach is via the foot and cycle path that runs through Portimão Marina, where there is a vast array of tourist facilities and shops, as well as a range of services related to recreational and competitive water sports. The beach affords

a fine view over the harbour and traffic in the River Arade. You will see sport and recreational vessels (yachts and sail boats) constantly to-ing and fro-ing, as well as fishing boats making their way back into the harbour surrounded by squawking flocks of gulls. From the marina's seafront avenue, you can see the eastern bank of the Arade and the picturesque town of Ferragudo, its beaches lined by ochre cliffs and the deep green of the Mediterranean vegetation. To the north, the Monchique Mountains mark the landscape.



The beach can be accessed on foot from the easternmost end of Praia da Rocha, and by car through Portimão, following the signs for the marina. There is plenty of organised parking in Portimão Marina. The support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.









lagoa



Praia Grande
 Angrinha
 Molhe
 Pintadinho
 Vale da Azinhaga
 Caneiros
 Carvoeiro e Paraiso
 Vale Centeanes
 Carvalho
 Benagil
 Marinha
 Albandeira
 Nova
 Senhora da Rocha
 Cova Redonda
 Tremoços
 Vale do Olival e Beijinhos



lagoa

Apart from the sea, the scenery consists essentially of undulating fields planted with vines for as far as the eye can see and dry orchards of almond, fig and carob trees. The exuberant, ever green Mediterranean scrub typical of the Algarve's *Barrocal* grows in the gullies and fields that are no longer cultivated. The municipality's villages have succeeded in preserving their streets with Portuguese crazy paving, the bright, rustic houses, the lacy chimneys and the mastery of the artisans, who produce Porches ceramics and pottery. Lagoa's essentially rocky coastline is characterised by the cragginess of its outline that reveals unexpected and truly

stunning scenery which constantly changes at the whim of time and the elements. The ochre carbonate rock cliffs are vulnerable to the erosive effects of both sea water and rainfall, which dissolve and wear them down, creating curious, lacy reliefs. The continuous erosive action of the water on the rock has resulted in some surprising karstic landscapes, where rocky ledges, sinkholes, arches and caves have been formed. But we are not the only ones attracted by this landscape; countless species of birds and bats have chosen these rock formations as a shelter and a place to nest.



Praia Grande and Praia da Angrinha

📍 37° 7' 3.22" N 8° 31' 17.08" W

📍 37° 7' 17.25" N 8° 31' 19.97" W

These beaches are located right in the River Arade estuary, next to Ferragudo. The access to the sands is aligned with the opening of the big jetties on the Arade and you can see an array of masts and white triangles next to western jetty in Portimão Marina. The spacious sands are framed by a line of very craggy cliffs where you can see galleries and caves. The rocky walls are covered in lots of vegetation, especially plants that have adapted to the sea spray, such as saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush, or typical dune plants such as Cretan trefoil, which colonise the little rocky cavities where sand accumulates. A walkway crosses a large part of the

beach, and there are tourist facilities alongside it. Although very popular, there are some quieter sections towards the south, where a green patch, signalling a pine grove, stands out against the warm colour of the cliff. To the north of the S. João do Arade Fortress that, together with the Santa Catarina Fortress on the other bank of the river, once defended the estuary, you will find Angrinha Beach, its configuration changing at the whim of the stream which flows on to it. This is a little beach lying at the base of Ferragudo, a traditional fishing village whose white verandas hunch over the east bank of the River Arade.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Access is by foot and by tarmacked road from the village of Ferragudo (about 5 km from Lagoa), following the signs for Praia Grande. There are medium-sized organised car parks next to the beaches. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Praia Grande. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Molhe

📍 37° 6' 36.02" N 8° 31' 10.75" W

This is a small beach that has formed around the eastern jetty on the River Arade. Access to the sands is from an elevated stopping point, down a steep stone staircase cut into the cliff face. The cliffs, with their markedly warm colours, are very cracked and craggy and countless boulders are visible on the sands, the remnants of past landslides. Huge bushes of saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush cover the rocky walls.

These plants are especially adapted to the sea spray. As you head towards the inner estuary, you will see the tiny beach made by sand accumulating next to the jetty. The water is calm here. On the side of the jetty facing the sea, the beach is bigger and so are the waves; they often flow right over the jetty and the surfers, as they scour the horizon watching for waves.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. You should be aware that a large part of the beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Ferragudo, following the signs for "praias" (beaches) for approximately 2.5 km. The beach is signposted. There is a medium-sized organised parking area. There are usually no lifeguards here. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Pintadinho

📍 37° 6' 28.18" N 8° 31' 6.39" W

This is the municipality of Lagoa's first maritime beach after the mouth of the Arade. The sands stretch to the north of Ponta do Altar, a long, narrow point where a lighthouse was built. The rich scrubland of the Algarve's *Barrocal* reaches right up to the coastline here, mingling with the typical vegetation of the cliffs exposed to the sea winds. This means that the beach is framed by a dense patch of vegetation: mastic trees, thyme, myrtle, dwarf fan palms, Spanish broom, white-leaved rockrose and cistus, grow enveloped by a tangle of lianas. A variety of marine

fossils can be seen in the warmly-coloured cliff walls, as well as some remarkable shapes and forms, such as the caves that are visible at the base of Ponta do Altar, caused by the sea eroding the limestone. Especially worthy of note is the huge dome with two arches that delimits the beach at its northernmost boundary. The beach faces west and from it you can see the sands at Pintadinho and the mouth of the River Arade, outlined by its jetties and backed by the marina and the city of Portimão.

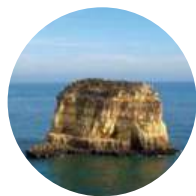


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Ferragudo, following the signs for "praias" (beaches) for approximately 3 km. The beach is signposted. There is a medium-sized, informal parking area on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: west.





Praia do Vale da Azinhaga

📍 37° 6' 21.06" N 8° 30' 55.76" W

This small beach lies to the east of Ponta do Altar and is characterised by its markedly natural setting. The cliffs are tall at either end of the beach but are low in the middle, forming a curious suspended valley above the current sea level. To the west, the tall, almost straight line of the Ponta do Altar cliff bears down, and you can see huge caves. Rocky ledges are visible along the horizon, a more modestly-sized one next to the beach and another larger one that stands out more from the coast. This is the *Leixão da*

Gaivota (Herring Gull Ledge) which has been designated a Special Protection Zone for Birds under Rede Natura 2000 due to its importance for a variety of sea birds. You will often see colonies of great cormorants on the ledge, which use it as a winter sleeping spot. And birds of the heron family (such as the cattle egret and little egret) use it for sleeping and nesting, a rare occurrence in Europe, since these birds normally prefer to rest and nest on trees on land.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. The beach is narrow and you should only go there at low tide. You should also be aware that this entire beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



The best way to get to this beach is by boat but there is also access on foot from Praia dos Caneiros, although only at low tide. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-west.





Praia dos Caneiros

📍 37° 6' 18.41" N 8° 30' 49.72" W

This beach follows on from Vale da Azinhaga, and Ponta do Altar and Leixão da Gaivota can still be seen to the west. It is a fairly long and wide beach, framed by high cliffs in alternating tones of ochre, pink and white. The rocky walls are deeply grooved and eroded by rain water and the cliff is much lower at the central section of the beach. At the base of the cliff the impressive caves carved out by the sea are a clearly visible sign of its erosive effects. Traces of an old

landslide can be seen on the eastern section of the beach, and many boulders are actually in the water, where they have been colonised by typical intertidal marine organisms. Some parts of the cliff are sort of “cementy”. They are grey in colour, more resistant and have a variety of typical cliff plants growing on them: thyme, samphire, gold coin daisies, statice, saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Ferragudo or Lagoa, following the signs for “praias” (beaches). The beach is signposted. There is a small, organised car park next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Carvoeiro and Praia do Paraíso

📍 37° 5' 46.85" N 8° 28' 17.87" W

📍 37° 5' 48.97" N 8° 28' 31.70" W

Carvoeiro was once a fishing village and has now become a cosmopolitan tourist resort. It boasts a welcoming bay with calm waters. The cliffs around the beach form an amphitheatre, dotted with the brightly whitewashed village houses, taking advantage of the appearance that the passage of time has brought to the rocky wall to make this the municipality's tourism hallmark. The brightly coloured fishing boats that share the sands with the beachgoers put to sea not only to catch fish but also to take tourists to visit the sea caves and unspoiled beaches that are inaccessible by land. The footpaths and viewpoints on the cliff tops afford

excellent walking opportunities and magnificent panoramic views over the scenic cliffs and the ocean. Behind the beach, there is a sunny central square, an appealing spot for socialising and shopping. This is quite a busy beach with lots of entertainment. When you visit Carvoeiro, be bold: head up the road to Paraíso (Heaven) that runs along the cliff to the west and discover Praia do Paraíso, a small, shell-shaped beach nestling between the high cliffs. Access is via a long, narrow, winding staircase and you feel like you are entering a rocky pool where the damp air is heavily impregnated with salt.

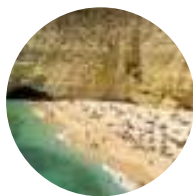


See warning relating to the beach on page 70.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Lagoa, following the signs for "praias" (beaches) for approximately 5 km. Both beaches are signposted. There is limited organised parking in the vicinity of Carvoeiro beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Carvoeiro beach. Carvoeiro is an accessible beach. Paraíso Beach lies 500 m to the west of Carvoeiro beach and there is a small parking area on the cliff top. Orientation: south-west.





Praia de Vale Centeanes

📍 37° 5' 28.01" N 8° 27' 17.09" W

The beach stretches out towards the west and is backed by imposing, deeply-eroded cliffs. At the base of the rocky walls, you can see caves that have been cut out by the sea; and in the central section of the beach, the cliff face is lined with fine gullies and grooves caused by the rain water running down it. There is a wide walkway on the sands, running alongside a rocky platform where typical cliff plants and marine fossils are visible. This is a great beach for walking. A wooden staircase marks the beginning of a na-

ture trail that takes you to the top of the eastern cliff, which is covered in exuberant coastal scrub and affords a fine view over the coastline. And snorkelling is a great way to discover the secrets of the marine life, from characteristic intertidal creatures (barnacles, mussels, limpets and anemones) visible on the rocky walls to shoals of various types of bream and Mediterranean rainbow wrasse, swimming around the rocky ledges.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Lagoa or Carvoeiro, following the signs for "praias" (beaches). The beach is signposted. There is a small, organised parking area. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Carvalho

📍 37° 5' 12.41" N 8° 25' 55.10" W

Here, an angular cut in the coastline shelters a small, welcoming bay lined by deeply-eroded ochre rock walls. A huge, scenic rocky ledge marks the central line of the beach, dividing the horizon. The cliffs remain high along the entire length of the beach. Access to the sands is through a hand-dug tunnel in the rocky wall, where you can see marine fossils. And someone took pleasure in digging out not only the tunnel but also a number of porticos and even a

convenient space for a bar, right in the cliff face. The verdant gully preceding the beach is home to dense coastal scrub, comprising mainly juniper, mastic trees and dwarf fan palm, Europe's only native palm tree. A tangle of liana grows profusely over the bushes, which are coloured by patches of lichens in the rainy months. Typical cliff plants, such as the eye-catching gold coin daisies, grow on the limestone rock exposed to sea spray.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Lagoa, following the signs for "praias" (beaches). The beach is signposted. There is a medium-sized area for organised parking at the holiday village Urbanização Algarve Clube Atlântico and informal parking on beaten earth approximately 300 m from the Terraços de Benagil development. There are no support infrastructures and usually no lifeguard on duty during the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia de Benagil

📍 37° 5' 14.55" N 8° 25' 35.24" W

This beach lies at the bottom of a very deep valley next to the little fishing port of Benagil. The fishing village to which it owes its name stands high above on the cliff top. Access to the beach is through the area reserved for the fishing boats, which also take tourists on trips to visit the area's sea caves and unspoiled beaches. Once you have passed the colourful fishing boats, the beach stretches out eastwards to the imposing ochre-coloured cliffs of carbonate

rock with an abundance of marine fossils. Also known as shell mounds, they bear witness to a bygone time when the sea came farther inland. These rocks are now craggy and deeply eroded by the combined effect of the rain (which dissolves the limestone rock) and the mechanical force of the sea. In Benagil, you can see eroded rocks typical of karstic landscapes, such as caves or sinkholes, cut into the cliff face.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from Lagoa or from the EN 125, turning south next to the International School of the Algarve and following the signs to the beach (praia). You can park on the edge of the road. There is a restaurant and WC nearby but there are usually no lifeguards here. Orientation: south.





Praia da Marinha

📍 37° 5' 23.67" N 8° 24' 42.08" W

A huge, gentle staircase gives you access to a small bay. As you approach the line of the cliff, you will notice that the sands extend to the west. Warmly-coloured, very craggy and fissured limestone cliffs surround the beach, displaying a remarkable variety of curious rock formations, such as arches, caves, ledges and sinkholes. The diversity of marine habitats here is remarkable too. Rocky environments and fields of sea grass shelter colourful sea urchins and anemones, shoals of various types of

bream, curious octopuses and cuttlefish and delicate seahorses. You can go snorkelling or scuba diving here, as there is an underwater trail that you can explore. Back on dry land, you will be charmed by the fields of orchids that bloom in spring and which you can see around the cliff-top picnic area. Or you can go for a delightful walk on the nature trail that runs along the line of cliffs between this beach and Vale Centeanes.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from Lagoa or from the EN 125, turning south next to the International School of the Algarve and following the signs to the beach (praia). There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia de Albandeira

📍 37° 5' 27.84" N 8° 24' 0.72" W

The narrow path to the beach winds its way through fields full of Mediterranean scrub, which is gradually taking over the old dry orchards where you can still smell the sweetish scent of carob. As you get closer to the sea, you will notice the exuberant coastal scrub consisting of juniper and other typical cliff plants such as samphire, saltwort, Mediterranean saltbush and the eye-catching gold coin daisies, forming a patch of green that surrounds the beach. The beach is small and is divided by a rocky outcrop

that provides sheltered spots for beachgoers, as well as natural swimming pools. You will notice how the cliffs surrounding the beach have been eroded by the action of the sea beating against the rock, forming caves at the base of the cliffs. The typical karstic environment of this stretch of coast, with its caves, underground galleries and rocky platforms full of cavities, is a favourite refuge and breeding ground for a variety of wildlife, especially sea birds and bats.

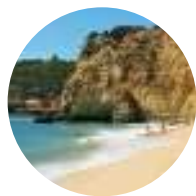


Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. You should be aware that a large part of the beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from Lagoa or from the EN 125, turning south next to the International School of the Algarve and following the signs to the beach (praia). There is plenty of informal parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia Nova

📍 37° 5' 46.56" N 8° 23' 18.98" W

This beach lies to the west of the Nossa Senhora da Rocha Chapel, built on a narrow promontory that stands out from the coast and from which you can admire a breathtaking panoramic view over the coast. This is a large beach, about 300 metres long, backed by a continuous line of cliffs in tones of ochre and red. You can see where landslides have occurred, forming tiers in the cliff face over time. These platforms are covered in abundant vegetation comprising plants such as saltwort, Mediterranean salt-

bush and shrubby sea-blite, species adapted to the sea spray and which also thrive in the saline soils of the marshes. To get to the beach, you go down a steep staircase in the cliff face, roughly in the middle of the beach, or through a tunnel that was patiently dug out by hand and which goes all the way through the rocky pontoon of Nossa Senhora da Rocha, a length of some 60 metres. You can see numerous marine fossils embedded in the rocky walls of the tunnel, for as far in as the sunlight reaches.



Access via the stairway is about 200 metres from the car park on the Nossa Senhora da Rocha promontory, following a footpath along the cliff top to the west. Access via the tunnel is by way of the neighbouring Nossa Senhora da Rocha beach. Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. You should be aware that a large part of the beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, turning south at Porches or from Armação de Pêra, and following the signs to the Nossa Senhora da Rocha. There is plenty of organised parking next to the Nossa Senhora da Rocha promontory. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Nossa Senhora da Rocha

📍 37° 5' 50.59" N 8° 23' 7.43" W

This very welcoming beach lies beside the Nossa Senhora da Rocha fishing harbour and therefore beachgoers share it with the fishing boats and equipment (especially buckets) and the huts where the fishermen store their things. The fishing boats also take tourists, on request, to visit the area's sea caves, where you can admire the fascinating play of light and colour, and to isolated beaches which can only be accessed from the sea. The beach is delimited to the east by the high line of the cliff, where various sinkholes cut into the rock are visible, and to the west by

the long Nossa Senhora da Rocha promontory, from which you can see all the way along the coast to Albufeira. A tunnel that has been dug out underneath the promontory lets you access the neighbouring beach, Praia Nova. The beach is surrounded by abundant greenery, including juniper and wild olive and mastic trees. Many plants typical of these saline environments can be seen growing on the cliff face, along with numerous birds that take shelter here: falcons, black-headed gulls, herring gulls and swifts.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, turning south at Porches or from Armação de Pêra, and following the signs to the Nossa Senhora da Rocha. There is plenty of organised parking next to the Nossa Senhora da Rocha promontory and areas of informal parking next to the road leading down to the beach. Traffic and parking are restricted next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Cova Redonda

📍 37° 5' 55.67" N 8° 22' 51.26" W

To get to the beach, you go down a long, gentle, paved staircase lined on either side with leafy vegetation consisting of pine and mastic trees, and Spanish broom. The bay in which the beach lies is not large, but the space is all divided up by inlets and other sheltered spots as a result of the shapes formed by the deeply-eroded cliffs. The rocky walls are dotted with patches of green due to the wide variety of typical coastline plants growing on them, such as thyme, samphire, gold coin daisies, statice,

saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush. To the east, there is a rocky ledge reminiscent of a huge ship. These rocky ledges are very resistant to erosion and stand out sharply in the sea as the coastline recedes ever faster. They are the chosen habitat of a variety of birds, including peregrine falcons, swifts, Caspian gulls and European Shags. There are other rock formations submerged in the areas used by bathers, so you are advised to be cautious when bathing and swimming in these tranquil waters.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, turning south at Porches or from Armação de Pêra, and following the signs to the beach. There is organised parking around 200 metres from the beach, along the access road. Support infrastructures include information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia dos Tremoços

📍 37° 5' 59.60" N 8° 22' 39.73" W

At Praia dos Tremoços, a process of beach nourishment and the construction of a jetty have resulted in the accumulation of sand in the small bay sheltered by high cliffs, where for some years there has been practically no sand at all. Access to the beach is through the holiday village built around the bay. You take a cool, stone path, lined by pine trees and oleander, to a signposted trail on the cliff top. To get on to the beach, you go down a narrow staircase, cut out of the cliff face, where you can see marine

fossils. These warmly-coloured cliffs have many gullies, mostly to the west, where the vegetation consisting of pine trees and Mediterranean scrub grows thickly. In the places where there is water runoff, you will also see reed plantations. You can follow the cliff top trail westwards, with due caution, and admire the superb views over the coast, taking in the ample, sandy bay of Armação de Pêra and the neighbouring beach of Cova Redonda.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. However, you are advised against using the cliff top trails that head eastwards. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, turning south at Porches or from Armação de Pêra, and following the signs to the Vila Vita holiday village. There is medium-sized, organised parking around 300 m from the beach, inside the holiday village. Support infrastructures include information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia de Vale do Olival and Praia dos Beijinhos

📍 37° 6' 6.68" N 8° 22' 11.39" W

📍 37° 6' 3.21" N 8° 22' 28.09" W

Despite its location at the westernmost end of the sandy bay of Armação de Pêra, the sands at Vale Olival still lie within a typically rocky area. The cliff surrounding the beach is deeply gullied, indicative of the existence of rainwater runoff, around which reed and tamarisk plantations have grown up, reaching all the way to the beach. A torrential stream, bordered by dense riverine vegetation, runs out on to the sands in the rainy months. The rocky walls rise up to the west and you can follow a cliff-top trail to the neighbouring beach, Praia dos Beijinhos. Typi-

cal coastline plants grow alongside the path and there are fabulous panoramic views over the ocean and the rock formations that have been carved out by the elements: rocky ledges, arches, sinkholes and underground galleries mark out the coastline. Having arrived at Praia dos Beijinhos, a staircase descends the cliff face to the sands, lined by aromatic thyme and eye-catching sweet alyssum. On the small but welcoming beach, two huge rocky ledges cut into the horizon with just a slit between them.



You can only get to Praia dos Beijinhos on foot, using the trail that starts from Vale do Olival. Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge. You should be aware that a large part of Praia dos Beijinhos beach lies in an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, turning south at Porches or from Armação de Pêra; Praia de Vale Olival is at the far western end of Armação de Pêra. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth next to Vale Olival and formal parking areas can be found in Armação de Pêra. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Praia de Vale Olival. Orientation: south.









silves



Armação de Pêra
Praia Grande



silves

This is mostly an upland municipality, with important historical and cultural features and a diverse natural landscape that offers a number of alternatives to the sun and the beach. Nevertheless, Silves, an inland city rising above a large, fertile valley ideal for farming, has managed to ensure excellent connections to the coast via the River Arade, which in bygone days was a major communications and trade route. Despite being the second largest municipality in the Algarve in terms of territory, Silves has a relatively short coastline – around 4 km in length – although it does boast two of the Algarve's best-known beaches: Armação de Pêra, due to its considerable tourist developments,

and Praia Grande, due to the natural landscape and habitats of great ecological value, which shelter interesting species of flora and fauna. The coastline of Silves benefits from a special location in the context of the western Algarve: the ample bay of Armação de Pêra. Here, the typically rocky coast gives way to one of the few areas in the region where the sand has accumulated, giving rise to a continuous stretch of sand almost 6 km in length, protected by an immense dune system. Two wetland zones, the Salgados Lagoon and the Alcantarilha Marsh, bring diversity to the landscape and are important sites in terms of biodiversity.



Praia de Armação de Pêra

📍 37° 6' 5.17" N 8° 21' 51.02" W

The far western end of the beach is still marked by the presence of the limestone cliffs that characterise the western Algarve. To the east, however, a large, sandy bay opens out, backed by the built-up area of the tourist resort of Armação de Pêra and offering beachgoers an array of facilities and services. A pedestrian seafront avenue with gardens, a view of the coastline and a selection of sunny, open-air cafés runs alongside the central section of the beach. To the east of the beach, and in keeping with Armação de Pêra's long fishing tradition, the sands are occupied by colourful fishing boats and the huts that the fishermen use to store their equip-

ment. The beach owes its name to the fact that this is where the fishermen from the village of Pêra (located farther inland) would set up their "armação" (fishing paraphernalia), which was the basis of their subsistence. Once you pass the fishermen's beach, there are fewer signs of human activity and the horizon opens up. You can then see sand dunes stretching for as far as the eye can see, and a wetland zone that lies at the mouth of the Alcantarilha Stream, with its typical vegetation and countless aquatic birds, such as massive grey herons and small but tireless plovers.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the western end of the beach.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through the resort of Armação de Pêra. There are areas of organised parking throughout the resort and informal parking on beaten earth is available at the westernmost end of the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south, south-west.





Praia Grande

📍 37° 5' 42.19" N 8° 20' 33.74" W

At Praia Grande, the sands stretch for over 2 km and the landscape is open and natural. Two wetland zones delimit the beach: the Alcantarilha Marsh to the west and the Salgados Lagoon, the latter being internationally renowned as a site for bird watching. The aquatic birds which can be seen here include important species such as the gracious black-winged stilt and the emblematic purple swamphen. The prevailing vegetation in the robust dune system (it is 300 metres wide in places) consists of aromatic species such as the curry plant, with its distinctive scent. On the

central section of the beach, a wooden walkway affords a panoramic view over the Salgados Lagoon and the dunes, and you will be able to see fossilised dunes and the eye-catching spiny thrift. There is another walkway around the inland section of the dune system, which goes around the Salgados Lagoon to the harbour area and leads to a viewpoint and bird observatory. In addition to the massive dune system, there is also farmland, especially fields sown with grain crops and dry orchards, and this is where you will be able to see old mills and the remains of hydraulic devices.



You can go for a walk along a nature trail that goes along the beach the farmland, giving you the opportunity to discover the area's various habitats.



The beach can be accessed on foot and by car through the village of Pêra (next to the EN 125) or from the EN 269-1 (Armação de Pêra), heading towards Albufeira/Guia. After roughly 3 km, the path becomes a dirt track for 1 km in the western section of the beach, and for 600 m in the central section. At the eastern end of the beach, you can get on to the sand by foot or via the neighbouring beach, Praia dos Salgados, by means of a bridge that crosses the lagoon. There are informal parking areas on beaten earth. The support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities in the western section, and information facilities in the eastern section. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. The western section of Praia Grande is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.









albufeira



Salgados
Galé
Manuel Lourenço
Evaristo
Castelo
Coelha
São Rafael
Arrifes
Peneco
Pescadores
Inatel
Alenães
Aveiros
Oura
St.ª Eulália
Maria Luísa
Olhos d' Água
Barranco das Belharucas
Falésia
Rocha Baixinha
Rocha Baixinha Nascente



albufeira

Albufeira city was called “sea castle” by the Arabs (*Al-Buhera*, dating from the 8th century), standing high and in the form of an amphitheatre overlooking the sea. The narrow streets, the old castle and the whitewashed houses with their roof terraces and arches are throwbacks to the Arab period. The safe harbour with its colourful traditional fishing boats, next to Albufeira marina, bears witness to the days when Albufeira was a village with a longstanding tradition of fishing and a prosperous fish export industry. Today, the fishing boats share the space with the vessels that take tourists on boat trips up and down the coast and to visit

the fabulous sea caves. Nowadays, Albufeira and its municipality constitute one of the main tourist centres in Portugal, boasting almost 30 km of coastline and over 20 beaches that differ greatly from one another in terms of their natural settings, the number of visitors they attract and the tourist facilities they offer. Although the facilities for tourists and the nightlife are the most famous in the Algarve, they exist alongside another reality: that of the tranquil villages, where you can still see handicrafts such as hand-made tiles, engraved copper or esparto grass mats, surrounded by dry orchards of blossoming almond trees.



Praia dos Salgados

📍 37° 5' 18.81" N 8° 19' 44.02" W

This beach follows on from the sands of Praia Grande, to the east of the Salgados Lagoon, a wetland zone that has formed at the final stretch of the Espiche Stream. To get to the beach, you go through the holiday village associated with the golf course that runs alongside the lagoon, descending an avenue with tall palm trees on either side. The area around the beach retains its natural state: to the west, you can see the robust dunes of Praia Grande and the water mirror formed by the lagoon. The vegetation on its

banks is dense and you can see, in particular, Eurasian coots and, in winter, great cormorants, fishing. To the east lie the dune fields, more modest in height, yet equally rich in flora and fauna. The beach is large with quiet spots. An extensive network of walkways has been built over the mouth of the stream and the dunes, providing opportunities for long walks both westwards, across the Salgados Lagoon, and eastwards to Galé.



Salgados Lagoon is not suitable for either bathing or for water-based activities.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Albufeira to Pêra (EM 526), following the signs for the beach for approximately 2.5 km. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Galé

📍 37° 4' 50.81" N 8° 18' 59.20" W

Praia da Galé stands at the far eastern end of the large sandy bay of Armação de Pêra. Here, the rock formations typical of the western Algarve once again make their presence felt, providing a series of nooks and crannies for bathers, especially at the eastern end. In contrast, the western end is more exposed. These carbonate rocks, in warm colours and with an abundance of marine fossils, also known as shell mounds, bear witness to a bygone time when the sea came farther inland. They are now deeply-eroded by rainfall and worn smooth by the sea, and

are covered in plants adapted to the sea spray, such as Mediterranean saltwort. In the areas where the sand has accumulated, especially the western section of the beach, you can still see typical dune plants, especially European beach grass, spiny thrift and the aromatic curry plant, growing on the dune system stretching between Salgados and Praia Grande. To the east, the landscape is dominated by the rock formations and you will see some stone pines growing along the crest of the orangey cliff.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the eastern end of the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. There is plenty of organised parking at the western end of Galé, some 300 m from the beach (access on foot via a raised walkway), and informal parking on beaten earth, next to the beach. Smaller organised car parking is available at the eastern end of Galé. Support infrastructures include a bar, WC and information facilities; at Galé East there are restaurants, WC and recreational facilities. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Manuel Lourenço

📍 37° 4' 36.22" N 8° 18' 34.01" W

This beach in the form of a shell is smaller than the ones to the west and it nestles between curiously-shaped cliffs. To the east, there is an intricate-looking rocky platform where you can observe the intertidal marine life at low tide. This is also a good spot for snorkelling around the submerged rocks. Warm colours dominate the landscape, softened by the green of the pine and mastic trees around the beach. Aromatic plants such as thyme and curry plants grow

on the cliff, but out of reach of the tides, while closer to the sands you will see an abundance of Mediterranean saltbush and saltwort, plants that are able to resist the sea spray. A small ephemeral stream flows on to the sand in the rainy months, resulting in thicker vegetation at this particular spot. The area around the beach is predominantly green and there are landscaped areas with local species.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the far ends of the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. Medium-sized organised parking is available about 100 metres from the beach. Traffic and parking are restricted next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Evaristo

📍 37° 4' 27.20" N 8° 18' 9.64" W

This is a small rocky beach nestling between low, attractively-eroded cliffs. Huge seaweed-covered rocks are scattered along the tideline and under the water, filling the air with the salty scent of the sea. The hot, dry beach is framed by plants, especially stone pine and mastic trees, and massive century plants. Closer to the sands, the predominant plant is Mediterranean saltwort, which is resistant to sea spray. You can go for walks along the cliff top; from there, you

will be able to observe the curious landscapes that result from these rock formations, deeply eroded by the elements. Snorkelling is a great way to discover the marine creatures that live in among the rocks, from the characteristic intertidal fauna (barnacles, mussels, limpets and anemones) visible on the rocky walls to shoals of various types of bream and Mediterranean rainbow wrasse, swimming around the rocks.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs, especially at the eastern end of the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. There is a medium-sized, informal parking area on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Castelo

📍 37° 4' 24.52" N 8° 17' 55.16" W

At Castelo Beach, the cliffs stand tall, marking the landscape. The beach, nestling between rocky walls, is full of hidden nooks and little bays. At the easternmost end, a scenic rock formation reminiscent of the battlements of a fantasy castle, give the beach its name. This small promontory is deeply eroded; the rocky ledges that stand out are made of a harder stone, which is more resistant to erosion. Around the beach, the dominant colour is the deep green of the pine trees. On the flattened tops of the rocky ledges, green is also the dominant colour, but in this

case, the plants are those that have adapted to a marine environment, such as saltwort, Mediterranean saltbush and samphire. A number of birds, such as falcons and great cormorants appreciate these sites that are inaccessible to land predators. This is a great place for walks along the cliff tops. You will be able to see the little bays and see the geological features generated by erosion, especially sinkholes and caves. However, you are advised to exercise caution and keep a safe distance from the edge of the cliffs.



Vehicle traffic is restricted on the cliff top to help minimise destabilisation of the cliff. On the sands, and given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. There is informal parking about 50 metres from the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Coelha

📍 37° 4' 26.16" N 8° 17' 36.72" W

The footpath to Coelha Beach takes you alongside farmland, where you can see olive and carob trees that look like they must be a hundred years old. As you approach the sea, you begin to see exuberant coastal scrub consisting of juniper, Kermes oak, mastic trees and dwarf fan palms (Europe's only native palm tree), which surround a stopping point about 100 metres from the beach. Once on the beach, you will notice a small bay, sheltered by high rock walls, with Alto da Coelha off to the east. A variety of marine fossils can be seen in the warmly-coloured cliffs, as well as caves and galleries that

have been carved out of the limestone rock by the erosive effect of fresh and salt water. Here, too, you can enjoy delightful walks along the cliff tops. The area around the beach retains its abundant, original vegetation and the rock formations, sculpted by the elements and the passage of time, are fascinating. You can use the wooden staircase leading up from the beach's support facilities to get to the cliffs at the western end of the sands, but you are advised to exercise caution and keep a safe distance from the edge of the cliffs.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs. Although beachgoers do use the beach, it is classed as a **restricted use beach**, since a large part of it lies within an area where there is a risk of landslides.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. There is medium-sized organised parking 400 metres from the beach. Vehicle traffic and parking are restricted next to the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia de São Rafael

📍 37° 4' 29.74" N 8° 16' 51.09" W

The beach is framed by warmly-coloured, very craggy and fissured limestone cliffs. There is a remarkable variety of rock formations on this beach – arches, caves, sinkholes and ledges – which have been formed by the joint effects of the mechanical force of the sea battering against the cliffs and the rain, which dissolves the limestone rock. Two of these rock formations are the *Ponte Pequena* and the *Ninho das Andorinhas*. Around the beach, you will see patches of pines and huge century plants, hanging over the deeply-gullied and grooved cliff tops.

Down on the sands, and exposed to the marine environment, there is an abundance of Mediterranean saltbush, a plant which, you could say, sweats salt; if you take a look in the morning or late afternoon, you will notice the formation of gleaming salt crystals on its leaves. When the sea water is clear enough, you will catch a glimpse of the mysterious outline of submerged rocks. A snorkelling expedition here will unveil the secrets of the abundant marine life on this part of the coast.



Vehicle traffic is restricted on the cliff top to help minimise destabilisation of the cliffs. On the sands, and given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the road connecting Guia to Galé, following the signs for the beach. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia dos Arrifes

📍 37° 4' 34.01" N 8° 16' 39.10" W

This little bay is sheltered by low, deeply-eroded cliffs where you can see sinkholes, arches and caves. Three huge rocky ledges, clearly out of proportion in comparison to the size of the beach, dominate the horizon, giving you the illusion of bathing in an impressive rock pool. This is why the beach is also known as *Três Pene-cos Beach*, since “três” means “three” and “pene-co” is a local word for “ledges”. These rocks, too, are deeply eroded and the central ledge forms

a curious window looking out over the horizon. Sea-spray resistant plants such as Mediterranean saltwort and samphire have succeeded in colonising the ledges, although out of reach of the tide. The area surrounding the beach is cloaked in the green of the pine trees, and in the undergrowth you can see dwarf fan palms, Europe’s only native palm tree. If you look over to the east, you will see the line of white and red cliffs on the still distant Praia da Falésia.



Vehicle traffic is restricted on the cliff top to help minimise destabilisation of the cliffs. On the sands, and given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the S. Rafael holiday village, following the signs to the beach. Medium-sized organised paved parking is available about 150 metres away. Next to the beach, parking is on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south / south-east.





Praia do Peneco

📍 37° 5' 11.21" N 8° 15' 17.04" W

This is the first beach to the east of Albufeira Marina and is a city beach, located in the old centre of Albufeira. A huge rocky ledge in warm tones stands on the sands, holding out against the generalised receding of the cliff and constituting a distinctive landmark. These rock formations are known locally as “penecos”. There is a lift down from the high cliff top to the western section of the beach. Alternatively, you can take the stone staircase that descends from the view-

point at the Dr. Frutuoso da Silva esplanade, which affords a fabulous panoramic view over the coastline. Access to the central and eastern sections of the beach is via a tunnel through the limestone cliff, located in the narrow streets of the historical centre with its multitude of bars, handicraft shops and sunny squares. The tunnel leads you on to a massive beachside terrace with open-air cafés overlooking the sea. This is a very busy city beach.



Given the risk of landslides, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the rocky ledge and from the cliffs that delimit the beach to the west.



Pedestrian access is through the centre of Albufeira or from the viewpoint at the western end of Albufeira. Vehicle traffic and parking are restricted all along the sea front. There are organised parking areas about 600 metres from the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia dos Pescadores

📍 37° 5' 12.65" N 8° 14' 58.79" W

Known in English as “Fishermen’s Beach”, Praia dos Pescadores is the continuation of Peneco Beach. It is framed by the pontoon to the east and, to the west, by the bright lights and white-washed houses that surround the beach like an amphitheatre and whose foundations seem to blend into the rock of the cliff face. Doing justice to its longstanding tradition of fishing, until only a few years ago you would have seen colourful traditional fishing boats on this beach but they have now been transferred to

the new safe harbour in Albufeira Marina. Access to the beach is via the square called “Largo 25 de Abril”, which has been turned into a large paved area where you will see people on roller skates, skateboards and segways. Alternatively, you can take the escalator down the cliff that delimits the beach to the east. There is a busy tourist area next to the beach with an endless array of bars and restaurants. This is a very busy beach due to its urban setting.



You can access the beach on foot either from Praia do Peneco or through the city centre. Traffic and parking are restricted in the vicinity of the beach, especially at the western end. There is plenty of organised parking around 200 m from the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia do Inatel

📍 37° 5' 8.52" N 8° 14' 36.98" W

The beach is named after the hotel belonging to the Inatel Foundation, which stands on a rocky veranda overlooking the central section of the long beach. An abundance of plants that have adapted to these saline environments, such as saltwort and Mediterranean saltbush, can be seen growing on the continuous line of steep cliffs flanking the beach. There is a footpath along the cliff top, with various stopping points

and viewpoints from which to admire the view over the beaches and whitewashed houses of Albufeira. To the west, you can see the old pontoon on Fishermen's Beach, Praia do Peneco and the houses forming a kind of amphitheatre overlooking the sea. To the east, the landscape is dominated by hotel buildings and thereafter by the eroded, ochre cliffs that continue on to Praia dos Alemães. This is a very busy city beach.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access on tarmacked roads and pedestrian access through the centre of Albufeira. There is plenty of organised parking around 200 m from the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia dos Alemães

📍 37° 5' 3.66" N 8° 14' 16.73" W

This beach follows on from Inatel Beach as you head eastwards. Back in the days of the canning industry, the Inatel facility was a factory belonging to a German family, hence the name of the beach ("Alemães" = "Germans"). When the Inatel Foundation took over the building, the stretch of beach next to the hotel was renamed after it, while the rest of the beach retained its original name. Praia dos Alemães enjoys a more natural setting than the beaches to the west. There are fewer buildings and the cliffs are not as high,

their straight lines giving way to a more cut-out shape and taking on organic contours. At various places, rainfall runoff has eroded the cliff face, carving inlets into it on its way to the sand. Patches of stone pine and mastic trees grow on the cliff top. Meanwhile, closer to the sands, Mediterranean saltbush is common and reeds grow next to where the runoff occurs. As you walk eastwards, the beach becomes progressively quieter.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access on tarmacked roads is through Albufeira (heading towards Inatel or Forte de S. João) and pedestrian access is via the built-up area next to Forte de S. João. There is limited parking next to the beach and small parking areas to the east (next to Forte de S. João) and to the west of the beach (close to the Hotel Alísios), where there are footpaths leading on to the sands. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia dos Aveiros

📍 37° 5' 0.68" N 8° 13' 53.45" W

This little bay follows on from the rocky massif that delimits the bay of Albufeira to the east and its orientation means you can contemplate the coastal panorama all the way to Vilamoura. The beach nestles between cliffs, giving rise to a tranquil rocky pool. You can go for a walk along the rocky platform at the base of the cliff to the west, bringing you to a footpath that runs along the top of the cliff all the way to the beach at Forte de S. João. The cliff is extremely worn from

the effects of the elements and you will be able to see many galleries, caves and sinkholes during your walk. In the rainy months, a small stream flows on to the sands, with reeds and poplars growing alongside it. Vegetation is abundant around the beach, ranging from plants adapted to sea spray such as Mediterranean saltbush and saltwort, to plants from the transitional area known as the *Barrocal*, including the dwarf fan palm, Europe's only native palm tree.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via the built-up area of Areias de S. João, following the signs to the beach. There is a medium-sized organised parking area 300 metres from the beach. Vehicle traffic and parking are restricted in the vicinity of the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia daoura

📍 37° 5' 10.08" N 8° 13' 35.46" W

The beach is huge – almost a kilometre in length – and very varied. To the west, tourist infrastructure dominates the skyline and the setting is urban, while to the east, after Pedra dos Bicos (a deeply-eroded rock formation sticking out into the sea), it becomes more natural and progressively quieter. Access to the western part of the beach is via the built-up area, passing through streets and small squares where you will find many sunny open-air cafés. On arrival, you will find a beach that is framed by modest but attractively-eroded cliffs. To get to

the eastern section of the beach you can also go through the town centre or, alternatively, through the holiday village located at the easternmost end of the beach, via a staircase that descends a gully with thick, cool pine groves alongside it. There are tourist facilities on East Oura Beach too, but the farther to the east you go, the quieter the beach becomes. The setting is characterised by the warm colours of the sand and the cliffs, softened only by the deep green of the stone pines.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is via the built-up area at Areias de S. João. There is plenty of organised parking around 100 m from the central section of the beach (next to Clube Praia da Oura). Parking is limited in the vicinity of the other accesses to the beach. The support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities, as well as recreational facilities on Oura West only. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. The western section of Oura Beach is an accessible beach. Orientation: south/south-west.





Praia de St.ª Eulália

📍 37° 5' 16.85" N 8° 12' 52.43" W

In Santa Eulália, the blue of the sea and the bright tones of the sand combine harmoniously with the cool green atmosphere of the surrounding pine grove. The stone pines form a dense wood and grow precariously perched at the edge of the small abysses that have been created by landslides on the cliffs, where rainwater runoff has carved many deep gullies. Down on the sands, the cliff appears polished and worn by the action of the waves and a stream

that flows on to the sand in the rainy months. A dense reed plantation grows around the mouth of the stream. The beach is large, with lots of delightful nooks as a result of the rock formations. There are some very peaceful sections on the beach as you head eastwards. A line of tall palm trees lines a small footpath on the central section of the beach. To the east, you can already glimpse the line of white and red cliffs on Praia da Falésia.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via the road connecting Areias de S. João to Olhos d'Água, following the signs to the beach. There is plenty of parking: an informal area on beaten earth, around 300 m from the beach, and an organised car park next to the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south.





Praia da Maria Luísa

📍 37° 5' 21.48" N 8° 12' 2.28" W

Pedestrian access to the beach is through the tourist complex that occupies the approach, descending a gully through which a torrential stream runs. The gully is cool and is lined by a curtain of bougainvillea and impressive stone pines and cork oaks. While the pine grove surrounds the beach, once on the sands the dominant plants are the sea-spray resistant samphire and Mediterranean saltwort. The beach is large and is framed by cliffs in warm colours that have been polished by the sea at their base and gul-

lied by rainwater runoff on their tops. Deeply eroded by the elements, these rock formations provide beachgoers with a series of inlets and sheltered nooks, as well as affording the opportunity to observe curious formations such as sinkholes and arches. From the far eastern end of the beach you can access a footpath that will take you to Torre da Medronheira. It is signposted and runs along the cliff tops to the beach at Olhos d'Água, giving walkers the chance to enjoy unique views over the coastline.



Since there is a possibility of rockfalls or stones coming loose and falling on to the beach, you should keep a safe distance from the cliffs, and take care if you are walking along the cliff top, staying well back from the edge.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via the road connecting Areias de S. João to Olhos d'Água, following the signs to the beach. There is medium-sized, organised parking around 400 m from the beach. Vehicle access and parking are restricted in the vicinity of the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south / south-east.





Praia dos Olhos d'Água

📍 37° 5' 23.49" N 8° 11' 26.11" W

This beach is located in the picturesque village of Olhos d'Água, a land of fishermen where, even today, beachgoers share the sand with the colourful traditional fishing boats. The beach and village are named after the fresh-water springs that flow on to the beach and are known locally as "olhos d'água" or "olheiros", meaning "eyes of water". You can see the springs at low tide at the far eastern end of the beach. However, the limestone cliffs are another hallmark of Olhos d'Água, since this is the first rocky beach in the

transition from the sandy eastern Algarve to the rocky western Algarve, and where you can observe intertidal marine species such as limpets, whelks, barnacles, small gobies, anemones and colourful seaweed. The deeply-eroded rock formations feature ledges, caves, arches and small, sheltered bays. This is a very busy beach due to its urban setting in a tourist resort. It has a central square with open-air cafés and a pedestrian seafront promenade lined with palm trees.



Given the risk of landslides and loose stones falling on to the beach, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is via the built-up area at Olhos d'Água. There is plenty of organised parking around 500 m from the beach and there are small parking areas next to the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia do Barranco das Belharucas

📍 37° 5' 27.14" N 8° 11' 0.19" W

From this beach on, the deeply-eroded limestone coastline of the western Algarve gives way to gentle cliffs of sand and clay, which stretch eastwards to the municipality of Loulé. The best way to get to the beach is on foot, not only because it is a very pleasant walk but also because the dirt track may not be in a suitable condition for vehicles. The trail winds its way through a deep gully with abundant leafy vegetation growing alongside. The rocky slopes are deeply grooved due to rainwater runoff, creating a variety of elegantly sculpted shapes.

The vegetation, mostly stone pines and typical coastal scrub plants such as juniper, sometimes grow precariously perched on the edge of small abysses caused by landslides, their tangled roots exposed to the air. Many birds take advantage of the woods and some dig shelters and nests in the rock face. The colourful European bee eaters, after which the beach is named, is one such. The beach is large and the sands stretch as far as the eye can see, interrupted only by Vilamoura Marina, about 5.5 km to the east.



Given the risk of landslides, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via the road connecting Olhos d'Água to Açoteias, following the signs to the beach. The final stretch (about 600 m) is on beaten earth and can be impassable to vehicles in the rainy months, since it occupies the bed of a torrential stream. There is a medium-sized organised parking area on beaten earth next to the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Falésia

Açoteias - 37° 5' 10.02" N 8° 10' 4.75" W

Alfamar - 37° 5' 0.65" N 8° 9' 32.73" W

This is a huge beach, part of a continuous stretch of sand almost 6 km in length. It is flanked by a line of high cliffs in deep tones ranging from reds to whitish, in a contrasting game of colours with the green of the pine groves above. At the western end, the cliff is high but soft, composed of sand and clay, so the rain has no difficulty in wearing away sinuous grooves and deep gullies. To the east, the cliff is gradually losing height, while remaining deeply eroded. In fact, it is this

erosion that keeps the beach sandy. As a result, you can see small cones of sand forming at the base of these cliffs, where typical dune plants such as sea daffodils, sea bindweed, spiny thrift, Cretan trefoil and sea holly are taking root. These colourful species intermingle with the more monotonously-coloured vegetation typically found on cliffs, here mostly consisting of Mediterranean saltbush. You will find some quiet spots on the beach if you walk along it for a bit.



Given the risk of landslides, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via Aldeia das Açoteias. There is plenty of organised parking at Açoteias, 300 m from the beach. Parking is more limited next to the beach. There is also plenty of organised parking at the Alfamar, 250 m from the beach. The support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities, as well as recreational facilities at Açoteias only. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Rocha Baixinha

📍 37° 4' 43.18" N 8° 8' 32.93" W

True to its name, which means "Low Rock Beach", the red cliffs of Praia da Falésia become lower here, gradually giving way to a dune system where typical sand vegetation grows, such as sea holly, sea medick and sea daffodils. The tourist complexes also temporarily give way to the agricultural fields on the strip of land alongside the Quarteira Stream, earning the beach its suggestive (in Portuguese) nickname of Praia dos Tomates (Tomato Beach). The path to the beach runs alongside the cultivated fields,

greenhouses and pastures, as well as older vestiges of the valley's agricultural use, such as norias. Between the beach and the large valley, there are still some deeply-gullied ochre rock formations, where the deep green of the pine groves intermingles with areas of dry orchards. Wildlife abounds in these woods; rabbits, foxes and many different birds, such as the typical hoopoe, find food and shelter here. The beach is large and to the east you will already be able to glimpse the jetties at Vilamoura Marina.



Given the risk of landslides, you are advised to keep a safe distance from the cliffs at the western end of Rocha Baixinha Beach.



Road access on tarmacked roads is via Aldeia das Açoteias, following the signs to the beach. After 3 km of paved road, you will reach a dirt track. Follow this for about 1 km to West Rocha Baixinha or 2 km to Rocha Baixinha. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. West Rocha Baixinha is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Rocha Baixinha Nascente

📍 37° 4' 29.87" N 8° 7' 46.68" W

East Rocha Baixinha is a large beach, which is delimited to the east by the jetties on the Quarteira Stream and at Vilamoura Marina. The soft, ochre cliffs disappear under the sands, giving rise to a large dune field with a great variety of plant life that you can observe from the network of raised walkways that cross the dunes and the beach. The fences in front of the dunes prevent people from walking on them, protecting the vegetation and allowing hardy plants to colonise the dunes, securing the sand and

encouraging the dunes to grow higher. Inland beyond the dunes, around the final stretch of the Quarteira Stream, an extensive flooded area has formed and a reed plantation has taken root (the Vilamoura Reed Plantation). This, too, is the site of the Vilamoura Environmental Park, and both constitute habitats for many different species of water birds. You can go for a walk along the nature trails here and spot grey herons and purple swamphens, or even mammals, such as the otter, close to the mouth of the stream.



You can get to the beach through Aldeia das Açoteais, following the signs to Rocha Baixinha Beach. After 3 km of paved road, you will reach a dirt track. Follow this for about 2 km. The final 300 metres are suitable for bicycles and pedestrians. The recommended accesses are through Vilamoura, either from the car park at the westernmost end of the beach or via the marina, crossing the wooden bridge over the Quarteira Stream.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is available via Vilamoura. There is plenty of parking at the westernmost end of the beach. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.







loulé



Vilamoura
Quarteira
Forte Novo
Almargem (Cavalo Preto)
Loulé Velho
Trafal
Vale do Lobo
Garrão Poente e Nascente
Ancão
Quinta do Lago



loulé

The municipality of Loulé has much to offer visitors. The city itself lies inland from the coast but affords magnificent views over the sea from the tops of hills dotted with almond trees. In the Moorish streets of the bustling city centre you can watch artisans at work, stitching leather goods or crafting items in brass. In the uplands, you can sample honey made from the nectar of woodland flowers, the typical strawberry-tree brandy called *medronho* and little cakes made with almonds and figs. Back down on the sea-

front, Quarteira is a buzzing holiday resort and fishing port. Next door is Vilamoura Marina, with its sophisticated tourist complexes. A little farther eastwards, you come to the luxury holiday resorts and golf courses of Vale do Lobo and Quinta do Lago, as well as extensive unspoilt areas of pine groves, marshland and dunes in the Ria Formosa Nature Park, a sanctuary for wildlife, where you can enjoy activities such as nature walks and watching aquatic birds.



Praia de Vilamoura

📍 37° 4' 18.31" N 8° 6' 58.58" W

The welcoming Vilamoura Beach is located between the eastern jetty of the marina and the dock at Quarteira, and is backed by one of Europe's largest tourist developments. What was formerly the Quarteira Estate has now been transformed into an enormous landscaped leisure area offering a host of activities. Golf is the resort's top sport but there is also an aerodrome, horse riding centre, shooting club, cross-country, cycle and pedestrian trails, tennis and squash courts, coastal cruises, art galleries, a

casino and a marina with a sophisticated setting comprising shops and open-air cafés and restaurants. In Vilamoura, ecological issues are also considered fundamental; the Environmental Park, which encompasses the final stretch of the Quarteira Stream, is home to various species of birds that take shelter amid the dense reed plantation growing in this wetland area. And at the Cerro da Vila Archaeological Museum, you can travel back in time to a first-century Roman fishing town.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is from Vilamoura. There is plenty of organised parking. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia de Quarteira

📍 37° 3' 52.78" N 8° 5' 48.57" W

Formerly a seafarers' village, Quarteira grew in response to the demand for its beaches and is now a major tourist resort. The fishing hub, with its boats and equipment huts, still exists but only at the westernmost end of the beach. Fresh, charcoal-grilled fish is ever-present at meal times in Quarteira, along with a variety of other traditional fish-based dishes such as bread soup with wedge-shell clams or squid with ink. The beach stretches for almost 2 km

and is divided up by a number of stone breakwaters. Sand has accumulated next to these, providing calm bathing conditions for beachgoers. A long, bustling seafront avenue called the "Calçadão" runs alongside the beach and offers a variety of infrastructures for holidaymakers and beachgoers, as well as sunny open-air cafés and restaurants and lots of entertainment in the summer holiday season. This is a very busy city beach.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is from Quarteira. There are areas of organised parking all the way along the seafront, and there is plenty of informal parking at the westernmost end of the city. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Forte Novo

📍 37° 3' 43.01" N 8° 5' 21.37" W

Praia do Forte Novo is located at the far eastern end of Quarteira but in a natural setting, well away from the urban bustle. There are no breakwaters here, a fact which has, unfortunately, resulted in a large amount of sand being lost from the beach. The soft, low, deep ochre cliffs typical of this part of the coastline make their appearance here, contrasting sharply with the deep green of the pine trees and pearly-white colour

of the sand. The sea often reaches all the way to the base of the cliffs which, here and there, has resulted in the roots of some of the pine trees becoming exposed. This is a transitional zone; to the west you can see the vast built-up area of Quarteira and Vilamoura, while to the east the buildings give way to the greenery of the pine trees atop red cliffs, punctuated here and there by small coastal lagoons.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is from Quarteira's eastern exit. There is very limited organised parking next to the seafront avenue and plenty of informal parking on beaten earth at the far eastern end of the beach. Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC nearby, and information facilities. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Almargem (Cavalo Preto)

📍 37° 3' 32.32" N 8° 4' 59.12" W

The red cliffs typical of this stretch of coastline give way here to the final section of the Almargem Stream, which is not always strong enough to flow all the way over the sands and into the sea. As a result, it sometimes floods the surrounding lands creating a calm water mirror, which is very appealing to aquatic birds. This means you can be on the beach and calmly watch great cormorants and huge grey herons diving into the brackish water to catch fish. The

wetland vegetation of reeds and rushes intermingles with the beach grass on the dunes at the edge of the beach. The small lagoon is surrounded by a vast wood of stone pine and cork oak, which is home to plants such as *Thymus lotocephalus* (a variety of thyme) and *Tuberaria major* (a variety of rockrose), both endemic to this part of the Algarve. This is a quieter area than the neighbouring beaches of Quarteira and Forte Novo.



Bathing in the lagoon is not recommended.



Road access on a tarmacked road is from Quarteira's eastern exit, heading towards Almancil, or from the EN 125, heading towards Fonte Santa. Almargem Beach is signposted. There are two accesses, one to the east and the other to the west, both on beaten earth for a distance of approximately 1.5 km. There are informal parking areas on beaten earth. The support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information and recreational facilities at the westernmost end of the beach, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Loulé Velho and Praia do Trafal

📍 37° 3' 20.76" N 8° 4' 39.17" W

📍 37° 3' 11.64" N 8° 4' 23.11" W

The route to these beaches takes you through a large rural valley with farmlands dotted with olive, cork oak and carob trees, where you will see the unmistakable azure-winged magpies and hoopoes flying around, as well as old hydraulic devices such as aqueducts and norias. As you approach the sea, the lands become waterlogged; this is the Carcavai Stream overflowing and forming an extensive area of wetland with reeds, tamarisks and rushes. To the east (Trafal), the dunes extend all the way to the wetland area, the beach is large and, in the distance, the

warmly-coloured cliffs and the pine groves are visible once again. To the west (Loulé Velho), the beach becomes narrower, the sea comes right up to the cliffs and the roots of some of the pine trees are becoming exposed as the soil is washed away. When the sea washes the sand away here, it uncovers Roman fish-salting tanks and the silt from an old estuary-lagoon system, remnants of a time when the sea level was considerably different to what it is today. There are also submerged ruins of a Carthaginian fishing settlement here.



Road access on a tarmacked road is from Quarteira's eastern exit, heading towards Almancil, or from the EN 125, heading towards Fonte Santa. The beaches are signposted. After the detour, the access is tarmacked for about one kilometre followed by a further kilometre on beaten earth. There is plenty of informal parking. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Praia do Loulé Velho, which is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia de Vale do Lobo

📍 37° 2' 54.20" N 8° 3' 54.01" W

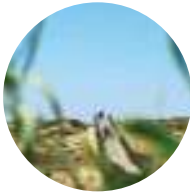
The ochre and red cliffs, soft and vulnerable to contact with fresh and salt water, are the hallmark of Vale do Lobo Beach, which is surrounded by a high quality tourist complex. Erosion has carved deep gullies in the cliff face exposed to the elements, resulting in some very curiously-shaped natural formations. The red tones of the cliff contrast with the pearly-white of the sand and the deep, refreshing green of the stone pines that shelter the greens of the golf courses under their canopies. The beach

is long but rather narrow and the sea often reaches up to the cliffs, leaving the plants with their roots exposed and putting a number of buildings and holes on the golf course at risk. For this reason, a number of beach nourishment processes have been conducted at Vale do Lobo, in order to enlarge the beach. There is a vast offering of leisure and sports including golf, first and foremost, tennis and a variety of water sports.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Almancil, heading towards Vale do Lobo for approximately 6 km. There is organised but limited parking. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Garrão Poente and Garrão Nascente

37° 2' 36.69" N 8° 3' 23.20" W

37° 2' 23.03" N 8° 3' 0.98" W

At Garrão, the line of cliffs gives way to huge dune fields that stretch all the way to the sandy barrier islands of the Ria Formosa, not very far from here. The beach runs along two valleys separated by a low cliff: the Dunas Douradas Lagoon lies in the valley to the west, while the smaller, ephemeral Garrão Lagoon is to be found in the valley to the east. Both these wetland areas are fresh water, a rarity on this coast and greatly appreciated by many species of aquatic birds. A walk along the banks of the Dunas Douradas Lagoon will give visitors an

excellent opportunity to observe the various birds that feed, rest or nest here, such as the Eurasian coot, mallard and the emblematic purple swamphen. The line of pine trees and its natural undergrowth that stretches all the way from Quarteira flanks the water mirrors, providing protection and shelter for the aquatic flora and fauna. A network of walkways crosses the dune, allowing visitors to observe the rich and aromatic flora on the sands, including endemic species such as Portuguese thyme.



The lagoons are not suitable for bathing. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Almancil, heading towards Garrão or Dunas Douradas for approximately 6 km. There is plenty of organised parking at both beaches. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. West Garrão (Poente) is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.





Praia do Ancão

📍 37° 1' 59.25" N 8° 2' 21.58" W

This beach is located at the far western end of the Ria Formosa lagoon system, already inside the boundary of the Nature Park. Although no water mirror can be seen yet, the waterlogged areas that flood at high tide are well-known and are covered in typical wetland vegetation. The stone pine and cork oak forest that crowns the low, red cliffs, and where rabbits and unmistakable azure-winged magpies can be seen, is now to the rear. Having passed the marshland, you will find yourself faced with a

large expanse of dune fields, covered in aromatic plants such as Portuguese thyme and curry plants. You cannot help but admire the eye-catching sea daffodils, the delicate sea bindweed and the typical spiny thrift, splashing the tops of the dunes with white and pink. The support infrastructures on the beach are nicely integrated in the landscape, allowing you to have a snack and simultaneously contemplate the sea.



In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from Almancil, heading towards Garrão / Ancão for approximately 7 km. Once you are through the holiday village you come on to a circular route in beaten earth, about 1.5 km in length. There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.





Praia da Quinta do Lago

📍 37° 1' 30.97" N 8° 1' 32.00" W

This beach, associated with a high quality tourist resort, is located in the heart of the Ria Formosa Nature Park. Access to the beach is via a 300-metre-long wooden bridge across the reed plantations in the estuary. From here, you can already contemplate the coming and going of the tides, the mudflats with their typical marshland vegetation, the shellfish gatherers going about their business and, if you are lucky, gracious flamingos next to the shining saltpans. This is a prime

bird watching area; there is a nature trail in the immediate vicinity, the high point of which is the observatory on the S. Lourenço Lake, from which you can watch mallards, Eurasian coots and purple swamphens, among other species. The dune is well-preserved, with a wide variety of plant life. Alongside the natural surroundings, there are excellent support infrastructures for quality tourism, including golf courses, tennis courts and a horse riding centre.



In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.




Road access is by a tarmacked road from Almancil, heading towards Quinta do Lago for approximately 7 km. There is plenty of organised parking. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-west.







faro



Praia de Faro
Barrinha
Ilha Deserta (Barreta)
Farol
Hangares
Culatra



faro

Marked by the unavoidable presence of the Ria Formosa, an extensive estuary-lagoon system protected from the sea by almost 60 km of sandy barrier islands, the municipality of Faro has always had close ties with the products and features that constitute its wealth: fish, seafood, salt and beauty. This vast lagoon beach, delimited by two peninsulas and five barrier islands between which the sea flows freely, is classified as a Nature Park, due to its noteworthy biological diversity. The interior of the lagoon is like a labyrinth, and

its intricate network of inlets from the estuary, marshlands, mudflats, sandbanks and salt pans is one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. The landscape is constantly changing, partly due to the moving sands, which form new sandbanks and barriers, and partly due to the coming and going of the tide, which alternately covers and uncovers the life forms that live in the marshlands. The municipality of Faro encompasses the Ancão Peninsula and the Barreta (Deserta) and Culatra Islands.



Praia de Faro (Península do Ancão)

📍 37° 0' 27.40" N 7° 59' 42.77" W

Sea Beach - Known as "Faro Island", this expanse of sand is actually part of the Ancão Peninsula that delimits the Ria Formosa to the west. Road access is via a narrow bridge that crosses one of the inlets of the estuary and banks of marshland and silt. Despite its urban setting and intense tourist traffic in the summer, at the far eastern and western ends of the beach, the summer holiday homes give way to the picturesque houses of fishermen and shellfish gatherers and, gradu-

ally, the dunes and the marshes take over the landscape. **Ria Beach** – You can go to the beach in the ria (estuary) but it is a narrow beach, occupied by many boats, and is not classified as a bathing area. This stretch of water is mostly used for water sports, and you will often see pleasure boats and other vessels sailing on it. This is a marvellous place to visit, encompassing the uplands and the city of Faro, framed by the Ria Formosa.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards the airport for approximately 6 km. Organised parking is available. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. During the summer, you can also get to the beach on one of the regular boat services that leave from the dock in the centre of Faro (Porta Nova). There is plenty of organised parking close to the quay, in Largo de São Francisco. Faro Sea Beach is an accessible beach. Faro Ria Beach has no lifeguards on duty. Orientation: south-west.





Barrinha (Península do Ancão)

📍 36° 59' 19.41" N 7° 58' 2.82" W

Barrinha (Barra de S. Luís) Beach is an area of great natural beauty, with no buildings. Here you can observe the flora of the dune system as well as the many birds that seek refuge and food here, such as the Kentish plover, the ruddy turnstone and the little tern. The configuration of the coastline changes constantly here due to the action of the wind and the waves and,

on the other side of the harbour, you can see the wide barrier island known as Ilha Deserta or, alternatively, as Ilha da Barreta, with its dense covering of vegetation. This is a very peaceful and usually deserted area, which you can access from Praia de Faro, either on foot along a long wooden walkway, or by boat.

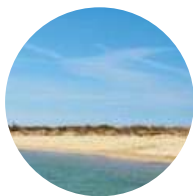


The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.



Pedestrian access is via a wooden walkway, 1.5 km in length, and a further 1 km walk along the sand. Access from the estuary is by private boat or water taxi. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south-west.





Ilha Deserta (Barreta)

📍 36° 57' 53.62" N 7° 52' 22.56" W

Access is by sea and it is always enjoyable to cross the labyrinths of sea and silt in the Ria Formosa. While the boat makes its way through channels and marshlands, keep an eye out for the various birds that come here to feed. Once on the beach, the sands appear to stretch out forever. Altogether, counting both the beach on the sea side and the one on the estuary, you have about 10 km of silence to enjoy. This part of the Ria Formosa is completely uninhabited. The only buildings are the ones used to provide sup-

port for beachgoers and a few storage huts. The line of dunes is still able to maintain its original vegetation and its capacity to provide shelter for wildlife, especially birds, which can nest here in safety, far from natural predators. Starting from the quay, you can go for a walk along the inland side of the line of dunes (on the estuary side), and then cross over it to get to the beach, a total distance of about 3 km. To the east, the island widens out a bit and Santa Maria Cape is the southernmost tip of Mainland Portugal.



The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the wooden walkways.



During the summer, or on request, you can get to the beach by boat from the dock in the centre of Faro (Porta Nova). There is plenty of organised parking close to the quay, in Largo de São Francisco. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south, south-west.





Praia do Farol and Praia dos Hangares

📍 36° 58' 33.68" N 7° 51' 42.56" W

📍 36° 58' 54.63" N 7° 50' 55.26" W

Situated on the Island of Culatra, this beach owes its name to the lighthouse that stands on the far western tip, at Barra Nova next to Santa Maria Cape. This harbour, stabilised by breakwaters, marks an inflection in the coastline's orientation: the barrier islands are now orientated to the south-east, exposed to the hot east wind and its waves. When you reach the quay, you will see that there are lots of buildings and tourist activity but the beach is huge and becomes progressively quieter as you walk eastwards. The large breakwater in the harbour is used

by the diving schools for their lessons, and for scuba and line fishing. About 1.5 km to the east, you will find Praia dos Hangares, a beach that can be reached either by boat or by walking from Farol. There is still an old bunker here and lots of barbed wire, a legacy of the times when the Navy anchored its seaplanes at the island. There is a small hamlet, mostly consisting of summer holiday homes, facing the estuary. The line of dunes is immense, hot and dry, and the beach is very peaceful.



The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.



There is a regular boat service from Faro in the summer and from Olhão all year round, with plenty of organised parking in the vicinity of the quays. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information facilities. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season, but only on Praia do Farol. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Culatra

📍 36° 59' 8.87" N 7° 50' 22.41" W

This beach is located at the easternmost end of the Island of Culatra, associated with a former fishing village that, until a few decades ago, comprised wooden houses. The hamlet, still home to fishermen and their families, now boasts various infrastructures and services. In the surrounding area, you will see boats belonging to the fishermen and shellfish gatherers scattered around the banks of silt that are

exposed at low tide. To get to the beach, you go through the hamlet and then the wide dune system, over a raised walkway 500 m in length. From here you can observe the varied flora of the dune fields, and bask in the warm, tranquil waters and hot east winds. An hour's walk eastwards brings you Barra do Lavajo, where you can enjoy the inviting natural sand pools and the constantly-changing landscape.



The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the wooden walkways.



There are regular boat services from Faro in the summer and from Olhão all year round, with plenty of organised parking in the vicinity of the quays. Support infrastructures include restaurants close to the beach, WC and information facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. There are no lifeguards on duty at Barra do Lavajo. Orientation: south-east.







olhão



olhão

The light-coloured houses of this stretch of the Algarve coast, built in cubist style with Moorish terraces, heading into the estuary, are unmistakable. The fishing tradition dates back a long way; there are vestiges in this municipality of fish salting factories (brine and *garum*) that are Roman in origin. Located in the heart of the Ria Formosa, the municipality of Olhão is known both for the skills of its fishermen and for the biological riches of the estuary, since the estuarine waters are used by many species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans as an area of refuge, growth and reproduction. This means

it is the perfect place in which to try delicious and highly-appreciated traditional seafood dishes, such as corn porridge with wedge-shell clams and razor-shell rice, as well as paying a visit to the markets, with their vast array of fresh fish and shellfish. And it is also a great spot for water sports such as canoeing, windsurfing, sailing and jet skiing. The Ria Formosa Nature Park Interpretation Centre is located in Marim and here you can go for nature walks, visit the Portuguese water dog breeding centre (this autochthonous breed was once on the verge of extinction) or visit a still-functioning tidal mill.



Praia da Armona

Sea Beach - 📍 37° 0' 47.14" N 7° 47' 45.67" W

Ria Beach - 📍 37° 1' 23.33" N 7° 48' 24.05" W

Sea Beach - This beach is located on the westernmost tip of the Island of Armona, close to Barra do Lavajo, and once again you have to cross the labyrinth of sand and silt in the Ria Formosa to reach it. The hamlet here essentially consists of summer holiday homes. There is also a campsite on the island, with bungalows, as well as local facilities for a variety of water sports. This is a large barrier island and to get to the beach on the sea side you have to cross the hamlet and the dunes, a total distance of about 1.5 km. The landscape opens up next to the sea. The sands stretch east-

wards for as far as the eye can see, giving those who enjoy walking an opportunity for some peaceful moments. The sandbanks next to the harbour delimit delightful natural pools. Here, too, you can observe the rich, aromatic flora of the dune fields, enjoy the warm winds from the east and admire the invariably fiery sunsets. **Ria Beach** – The beach on the estuary side of the island, Armona-Ria, is also classified as a bathing beach, giving you the opportunity to enjoy the clear, calmer waters of the estuary by spending your beach time on the sands closer to the quay.



The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the wooden walkways.



There are regular boat services from Olhão all year round, with plenty of organised parking in the vicinity of the quay. Support infrastructures include restaurants close to the beaches, WC and information facilities on Armona-Mar. There are lifeguards on duty on both Armona-Mar and Armona-Ria during the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia dos Cavacos

📍 37° 2' 10.20" N 7° 47' 45.65" W

This estuary beach is located in the heart of the marshlands, next to a cluster of storage huts that serves as support for fishing and shellfish gathering. A variety of boats anchor in the little bay, surrounded by gleaming saltpans. To the west you will find the Ria Formosa Nature Park's Head Office and Interpretation Centre with its tidal mill. The area around the beach is an excellent spot for observing the flora and fauna in the marshes and saltpans, from the typical halophyte plants (adapted to a saline environment) to the timid crabs. Particularly worthy of

note is the variety of wading birds that scan the silt as they hunt for food with their long beaks. You can expect to see black-winged stilts, pied avocets, black-tailed godwits, little stints, white storks, flamingos and various members of the heron family. The beach is rather narrow but this stretch of the estuary is wide and affords calm bathing conditions. The peace and quiet here are only broken by the sound of the trains, which pass by at regular intervals on the track just behind the beach.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Aldeia de Marim (approximately 3 km from Olhão). There is an informal parking area on beaten earth. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty. Orientation: south / south-east.





Praia da Fuseta

Fuseta - 37° 2' 34.23" N 7° 44' 39.65" W

Barra Nova - 37° 3' 14.68" N 7° 43' 26.86" W

The beach is located at the easternmost tip of the Island of Armona, opposite the fishing village of Fuseta, on the mainland. The Ria Formosa is narrower here and the boat zig-zags its way through the same channels flanked by marshland and banks of silt, but the journey is shorter. The sea storms of 2010 significantly altered the configuration of this narrow stretch of sand, and the small cluster of summer holiday homes that used to be here has now vanished. A new harbour had to be created artificially on the island.

Called "Barra Nova" (New Harbour), it is situated about 1.5 km to the east of the beach's bathing area. The support infrastructures have been upgraded and back-to-nature is the new motto on Fuseta Beach. The stretch of sand between the new harbour and the place where the old harbour used to be has been given the name Praia da Barra Nova (New Harbour Beach) and is now a deserted, unspoilt stretch of sand with extremely appealing natural pools at low tide.



The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong. In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the walkways.



Regular boat services run between Fuseta quay and Praia da Fuseta. You can get to Praia da Barra Nova either by boat (check availability at Fuseta quay) or on foot from Praia do Homem Nu (Naked Man's Beach) on Tavira Island. There is plenty of organised parking next to Fuseta quay (except when the fair is in town). Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC and information and recreational facilities. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season on Praia da Fuseta. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty at Praia da Barra Nova. Orientation: south-east.





Praia dos Tesos (Fuseta Ria)

📍 37° 3' 4.08" N 7° 44' 33.87" W

This beach is located in a sandy bay that stretches alongside the town of Fuseta, facing a section of the estuary. It is a favourite with children because of its warm, calm waters. At low tide, you can go through the reed plantation and banks of silt in the surrounding area (taking care not to disturb the shellfish nurseries) and observe the local wildlife, especially crabs and bivalves, but also wading birds searching

for food in the mud with their long beaks. At the far western end of this strip of sand, you will see a curious building with a palisade; it is a former lifeguard and rescue station. Despite its proximity to the built-up area, the quality of the water usually remains acceptable during the summer holiday season, since the water in the Ria Formosa is renewed with each tidal cycle.



Pedestrian and vehicle access on tarmacked roads is from the town of Fuseta. There is plenty of organised parking next to Fuseta quay (except when the fair is in town). Support infrastructures include a restaurant and WC, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.







tavira



tavira

In the municipality of Tavira, the gentle hills in the uplands of the Serra do Caldeirão gradually ease their way down to the sea, adorned with typical dry orchards where the sweet scents of olive, almond, fig and carob trees intermingle with those of the sea air. The coastline is gentle and sandy and stretches for almost 18 km. With its soft golden sand and warm waters, it is quiet and very inviting. Here, too, you must cross the Ria Formosa to get to the beach, which means an enjoyable boat ride and the opportunity to observe the flora and fauna in the wetland area, aquatic birds in particular. It is estimated that the Ria Formosa shelters over 30,000 birds annually, including residents and visitors. Its

proximity to the Ria also benefits the municipality with regard to fishing. Portugal's only remaining *arraial* (a set of support structures for fishing) is here in Tavira, the Arraial Ferreira Neto. In bygone days it provided shelter for the fishermen's families and for their tuna fishing equipment. Now a hotel, the Arraial houses a museum dedicated to this ancient art of fishing. Other features that mark the municipality's image are its saltpans, with their almost dazzling luminosity and the curious "scissor" roofs, a type of hipped roof with four sloping sides, which are very common in Tavira, especially in houses with a palace-like appearance.



Praia do Barril and Praia do Homem Nu

📍 37° 5' 9.88" N 7° 39' 43.87" W

📍 37° 4' 22.50" N 7° 41' 22.13" W

Praia do Barril is approximately half way along Tavira Island. It is a thin strip of fine, white sand. To get there, you just have to cross a small foot-bridge that takes you over one of the estuary's channels and then either take the mini-train or walk for about 1 km. Along the way, you should definitely take the opportunity to observe the fauna in the banks of silt, especially the *bocas* (a crab typical of these marshes) and, as you get closer to the beach, the plant life on the dune fields, where you can smell the intense aroma of curry released by the small curry plant. And there is also a nature trail, along which you will

find information about the Ria Formosa's environmental riches. The tourist facilities on the beach were adapted from a former tuna-fishing facility and you can still see the original buildings and some of the fishermen's paraphernalia, as well as a set of large anchors on display in the space around the beach. The beach is immense, and if you walk along it for 2 km you will come to Praia do Homem Nu (Naked Man's Beach), a deserted, totally unspoilt beach that stretches for a further 3 km, all the way to Praia da Barra Nova in Fuseta. Part of Praia do Homem Nu is classed as an official nudist beach.



In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the paths and raised walkways. The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong.



Access on foot or by mini-train is from the holiday village of Pedras D'El Rei (signposted on the EN 125). There is plenty of informal parking next to the complex and along the access road to Santa Luzia and Terra Estreita Beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Barril Beach is an accessible beach. There are no support infrastructures and no lifeguard on duty at Praia do Homem Nu. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Terra Estreita (St.ª Luzia)

📍 37° 5' 52.63" N 7° 38' 27.62" W

To the east of Barril, Tavira Island narrows until it becomes just a strip of sand no more than 250 m in width. This is called Terra Estreita (Narrow Land) Beach or, alternatively, Santa Luzia Beach, since this picturesque fishing village is where the boat to the beach leaves from. The beach is huge, and more deserted than the neighbouring Barril and Tavira Island beaches, giving you peace and solitude. When you get to the beach you can admire the eye-catching sea

daffodils and enjoy a dip in the warm waters of the sea. Often, during the summer months, the coastal waters are full of green seaweed, giving you the curious sensation of swimming in a kind of warm soup. Back in Santa Luzia, the seafront avenue offers a range of restaurants and eateries where you can enjoy the best of the estuary's seafood and typical dishes such as tuna *estupeta* (raw tuna with tomatoes, peppers and seasoning).



In order to help preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the EN 125, following the signs for "Barril" and "Terra Estreita". Access by boat is from Santa Luzia on regular services and private vessels licensed for the purpose. (Santa Luzia is a village about 1.5 km from the Pedras D'El Rei holiday village). There is organised parking along the village seafront. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Ilha de Tavira

📍 37° 6' 38.72" N 7° 37' 13.03" W

The beach is located at the easternmost end of Tavira Island, next to Tavira Harbour. Access is by boat, preferentially from the quay at Quatro Águas. The road to the quay runs alongside the River Gilão, where the traditional fishing boats may be sailing or anchored, and the gleaming salt pans, where the black-winged stilt, a bird that looks a bit like a miniature stork, can be seen feeding. This beach is the part of Tavira Island with the highest concentration of people. There are summer holiday homes here, as well

as a campsite and an array of tourist facilities, including bars right on the sands. You will also find support infrastructures for water sports and boat trips through the Ria Formosa. A small patch of stone pines, where chameleons can be seen, provides some variety in the typical dune landscape of the barrier islands. The warm, calmer waters of the beach on the estuary side of the island are favourites with the children, who also enjoy jumping and diving into the water from the quay.



In order to help preserve the dunes, you are asked to use the paths, rather than walking on the dunes themselves. The currents next to the harbour are usually very strong.



Access is by boat, preferentially from the quay at Quatro Águas (regular service) about 2 km from Tavira. Boats also depart from the centre of Tavira. There is plenty of organised parking next to the quay at Quatro Águas. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Ilha de Cabanas

📍 37° 8' 1.45" N 7° 35' 26.20" W

To the east of Tavira, lies the Island of Cabanas, a narrow strip of sand that stretches all the way to the harbour at Cacela, the easternmost harbour in the Ria Formosa. The beach is located opposite the village of Cabanas, whose origins date back to the times of the tuna-fishing campaigns. It remains a land of fishermen to this day. Along the recently upgraded Cabanas seafront avenue, you can spot the traditional fishing boats anchored in the estuary and the storage huts. The best way to get to the island is

by boat and the crossing only takes a few minutes since the section of estuary separating the island from the mainland is not very wide. Once on the beach, you will probably want to go for a walk; if you go a little farther, you will be able to enjoy some moments of peace and solitude. On your return to Cabanas, you can savour oysters and clams, gathered from the nurseries, fresh, charcoal-grilled fish and a variety of octopus dishes in the many seafront restaurants.



In order to preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the raised walkways.



Access by boat on regular services and private vessels licensed for the purpose, departing from the quay on Cabanas seafront. There is organised but very limited parking next to the seafront. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.









vila real de
santo antónio



vila real de santo antónio

Situated in the heart of the eastern Algarve, this municipality comprises a coastal strip between the municipalities of Tavira and Castro Marim, and then continues along the seafront associated with the mouth of the River Guadiana. Sardine and tuna fishing in the Algarve's coastal waters were responsible for turning Vila Real de Santo António into a major canning centre in the late 19th century and throughout most of the 20th century. As a port city, it was very busy with river traffic that transported the ores extracted from the S. Domingos Mine (dating back to Roman times), and was one of the richest and most dynamic places in the Algarve, early last century. Later, in the 1960s, the bay

of Monte Gordo, with its vast beach and warm, calm waters, began to attract large numbers of tourists, giving rise to one of the Algarve's major holiday resorts, a pioneer in terms of its tourist offering. Today, alongside the fishing boats the majority of boats sailing the river are pleasure craft, taking people on trips upriver to enjoy the natural scenery of the Guadiana. Vila Real de Santo António considers the riches of its natural habitats to be of fundamental importance. They include the wide Guadiana estuary, the National Scrubland of Coastal Dunes, and the Ria Formosa which, in this municipality, boasts the town of Cacela Velha as a prime viewpoint.



Praia de Cacela Velha (Fábrica Mar)

📍 37° 9' 4.55" N 7° 32' 56.83" W

The beach is located at the easternmost end of Cabanas Island, close to Cacela Harbour and you can get to it by boat departing from a place called "Sítio da Fábrica" ("the site of the factory") in Cacela Velha. This historical town, where you can admire the bright white houses with their traditional cobalt blue decoration, is surrounded by dry orchards on gentle hills all the way down to the estuary. The village grew up around a mediaeval noria and affords a magnificent, lofty view over the Ria Formosa, next to the D. Paio

Peres Correia Fortress. After crossing the narrow section of estuary, you will notice a thin strip of sand, deserted and unspoiled, constantly changing due to the shifting sea and winds. Here, in total peace and quiet, you can admire the rich dune flora of this sandy barrier, broken only at the places where the sea stubbornly breaches the natural wall. Countless birds seek refuge in these dunes and you can expect to see species such as the Kentish plover, the ruddy turnstone and the little tern.



In order to preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways and paths.



Access by boat is aboard private vessels licensed for the purpose, departing from the "Sítio da Fábrica", about 1.5 km from Cacela Velha. There is a small organised car parking area at the departure site. There are no support infrastructures and usually no lifeguard on duty during the summer holiday season. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Manta Rota

📍 37° 9' 48.84" N 7° 31' 8.95" W

This is a large beach, bathed by warm waters, associated with the village of Manta Rota. It continues on from the sandy barrier that delimits the Ria Formosa lagoon system to the east. Although Manta Rota retains some of its original character as a fishing village, it is today a major tourist resort. A large square with places to stay, commercial establishments, a children's playground, market and arts centre offers plenty of entertainment, especially in the summer, and provides several access points to the beach. The network of paths and raised

walkways leading off the square will take you through the dunes, giving you the chance to observe the plant life of the dunes from the inland side, where you will see aromatic species such as the curry plant and bushes such as bridal veil broom (a characteristic plant in the sandy eastern Algarve), all the way to the side facing the sea, where the dominant plants are beach grass and sea holly. Although this is a very popular beach, you will still be able to find some quiet spots, especially at the far ends of the beach.



In order to preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways and paths.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Manta Rota. There is plenty of organised parking; outside of the summer holiday season, the western car park is for camper vans only. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia da Lota

📍 37° 9' 57.89" N 7° 30' 39.05" W

Praia da Lota continues on from Manta Rota and is where the village's fishing activity is concentrated ("lota" means "fish auction"). Consequently, the farther you go across the almost 200 m of pathway leading to the beach, the better your view of the various traditional fishing boats, storage huts and fishing paraphernalia, a reminder of bygone days when this beach was used as a fish auction and the freshly landed fish was sold straight off the boats. Fishing continues to this day but the beach is now mostly used by beach-

goers. It is a very large beach offering a variety of leisure facilities and a sports area. The vegetation you will see on the low dunes consists mainly of beach grass and the fluffy *Otanthus maritimus*, a type of cottonweed, both typical dune plants. Farther inland, the dunes are covered with taller scrubland plants such as the characteristic bridal veil broom. The beach is relatively calm, very hot and bright. The warm waves break gently on the shore.

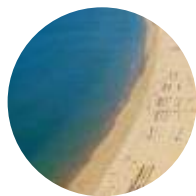


In order to help preserve the site, you should only cross the line of dunes on the paths.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the village of Manta Rota, following the signs for Praia da Lota. There is a medium-sized organised parking area. Support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia de Monte Gordo

📍 37° 10' 39.18" N 7° 27' 4.59" W

Human occupation of this site dates back for many years, although for much of that time it was limited to fishing communities. Now the coloured fishing boats and fishing paraphernalia are to be found only on one section of the beach, the remainder having been taken over by restaurants, information and recreational facilities for beachgoers, and sports areas. Having been a pioneer in the Algarve's history of tourism, Monte Gordo remains a major tourist centre to this day. The central section of the beach is backed by a lively seafront avenue

with gardens, places to stay and multiple tourist facilities. The atmosphere is the hottest, driest and brightest in the Algarve, and the sea here is renowned for being calm and warm. On the little dunes that still form in the busiest part of the beach, only the thorny sea holly has been able to withstand the constant treading of tourist feet. At the far ends of the beach, the dunes are higher and you will be able to admire the vegetation from the raised walkways that lead on to the beach.



In order to preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes and the sands on the paths and walkways.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Monte Gordo. There is plenty of organised parking. Access at the easternmost end of the beach is through Monte Gordo Municipal Campsite. There is a medium-sized informal parking area on beaten earth. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south.





Praia de Santo António

📍 37° 10' 24.47" N 7° 25' 18.54" W

This beach is located next to the mouth of the Guadiana and continues for a distance of 3 km, bathed by warm, calm waters, all the way to neighbouring Monte Gordo. The National Coastal Dune Scrubland, a forest of maritime and stone pine growing on the dunes, gives a fresh, green feel to this Mediterranean setting, excessively hot, dry and bright. The most interesting way to get to the seafront is along a foot- and cycle path called "Caminho dos Três Pauzinhos", along which a mini-train also runs. This path goes through a large pine grove where you can

smell the aromas of the resin, thyme and curry plants, the latter giving off a strong curry odour. Sharp-eyed visitors may spot the slow-moving and generally camouflaged chameleons ambling through the pine grove. Close to the beach, bridal veil broom, a tall scrub plant typical of the eastern Algarve sands, prevails. And on the crests of the dunes closest to the sea, you will see beach grass. The mouth of the Guadiana can be seen off to the east and on the other side of the great southern river lies Spain.



In order to help preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways.



Road access by tarmacked road is from the EN 125, heading towards the jetty at Vila Real de Santo António (Ponta da Areia) and then crossing the scrubland, following the signs to the beach (about 1.2 km of the road is dirt track). There is plenty of informal parking on beaten earth. As an alternative, you can take the foot- and cycle path or the mini-train (entrance next to Vila Real de Santo António Sports Complex), a distance of about 1.5 km. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information and recreational facilities. There are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.







castro marim



Alagoa (Altura)
Praia Verde
Cabeço



castro marim

This municipality stretches from the uplands of the Algarve's interior to the sea, following the course of the River Guadiana almost to its mouth. Water overflowing the banks of the southern river flooded large stretches of land, providing suitable conditions for orchards and vegetable gardens and, more significantly, for one of the most productive habitats on the planet: the marshland. The Castro Marim and Vila Real de Santo António Marshland Nature Reserve, with its reed plantations, channels, banks of silt and overly-bright saltpans, shelters a huge variety of plants and animals, but it is the birds in particular – flamingos, black-winged stilts, pied avocets and many others

– that constitute this protected area's calling card. A small strip of the municipality's territory reaches all the way to sea, encompassing three beaches that provide an excellent example of the eastern Algarve's Mediterranean character. These beaches are conjoined sections of the same strip of sand connecting the Guadiana estuary to the Ria Formosa and backed by dense dune pine groves. Humans have lived here since the Neolithic Era. There are signs of a walled city on the hill in Castro Marim where the castle, of Arab origin, stands today, affording a lofty, strategic view over the Guadiana and the border area.



Praia da Alagoa (Altura)

📍 37°10'11.83"N 7°29'52.75"W

The village of Altura, essentially a summer holiday resort, stands alongside the long sandy beach and its wide line of dunes. Raised walkways lead to various parts of the sands, and give you the opportunity (especially on the western walkway) to observe how the dune vegetation changes from the inland edge of the dunes to the side facing the sea. On the inland side, the vegetation makes the dunes appear taller. The typical bushes of bridal veil broom provide some shade and cut the glare of the hot, bright

summer sun. Next to the sea, where the dunes are higher, there is an abundance of European beach grass, sea holly, fluffy cottonweed and eye-catching beach daffodils. The beach is vast, stretching for as far as the eye can see, and the sea is calm and warm. There are facilities for a variety of beach activities including a sports area and water sports. If you look over to the east, you will see the greenery around the beach becoming denser and you can glimpse the resort of Monte Gordo through the coastal pines.



In order to help preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Altura / Alagoa. From this point on, you must walk. There is plenty of organised parking at the central section of the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia Verde

📍 37° 10' 26.00" N 7° 28' 49.35" W

True to its name, this beach is surrounded by a stone pine forest growing down the gentle hills to the sands. Chameleons can be seen ambling leisurely around the woods. The pines have a curious mushroom shape and the undergrowth is rich and dense throughout the entire forest. There are fabulous panoramic views over the sandy coast from the car park serving the beach. This is located inside the tourist complex surrounding the beach. To get down to the sands, you follow a path paved in

Portuguese crazy paving lined by tall *retamal* bushes, typical of the sandy eastern Algarve. Once on the beach, you will see delicate plants such as beach grass, eye-catching sea daffodils and aromatic curry plants. An old well on the beach, a remnant from a time when the sea did not come so far inland, grows and shrinks to the rhythm of the sea washing the sands in and out. The atmosphere is hot, bright and dry, and the sea is calm and warm.



In order to help preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways.



Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Praia Verde. There is plenty of organised parking next to the tourist complex. Informal parking on beaten earth is available at the start of the footpath (about 150 m long) to the beach. Vehicle traffic and parking are restricted next to the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.





Praia do Cabeço

📍 37° 10' 32.17" N 7° 28' 14.22" W

As you set off along the path to the beach, you cut through a tourist complex where you can still see signs of the old rural landscape. The cork oaks and olive trees gradually give way to the dune pines typical of the coast. The stone pines form a dense forest and growing alongside them you will find strawberry trees, mastic trees, wild asparagus and aromatic plants such as curry plants and rosemary. The shade and deep green of the vegetation are comforting. If you look closely, you may be able to spot indo-

lent chameleons and birds with a curious crest reminiscent of a giant butterfly. Close to the beach, the scenery is dominated by dune fields with maritime pines and the typical bridal veil broom growing on them, while on the crests of the dunes closest to the sea, you will see beach grass. Next to the beach's eastern walkway, there is an entrance to a stretch of the coastal "ecovia" (cycle route) that goes all the way to Monte Gordo. The beach is vast and peaceful and the waters are safe and warm.



In order to help preserve the site, you should always cross the dunes on the walkways.



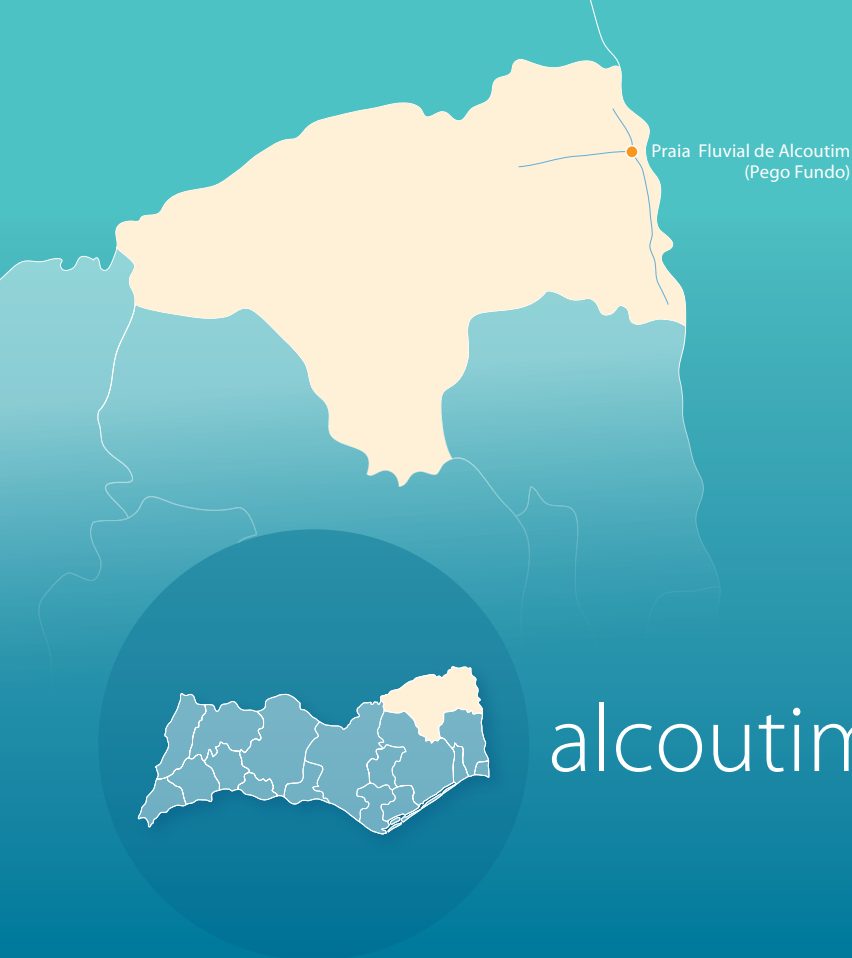
Road access is by a tarmacked road from the EN 125, heading towards Praia do Cabeço for about 1.3 km (the access path to the western section of the beach is beaten earth). There is plenty of informal parking at the eastern, central and western sections of the beach. The various support infrastructures include restaurants, WC, information and recreational facilities, and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-east.







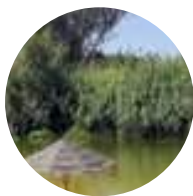
alcoutim



alcoutim

Far from the coast and facing the great southern river, Alcoutim stands in the shape of a gleaming, whitewashed amphitheatre overlooking the Guadiana. On the other bank, stands the Spanish town of San Lúcar del Guadiana. There are traces of human occupation here dating back thousands of years, from the Neolithic Era to the Arab period. The population considers

its connection to the land to be one of its great riches, and farming, shepherding, hunting and traditional handicrafts are their main activities. But the river makes its presence felt at every bend in the road and you will see streams, pools, anchorages and dams. The art of fishing is present too – in the tasty dishes of eels and lampreys!



Praia Fluvial de Alcoutim (Pego Fundo)

📍 37° 28' 19.40" N 7° 28' 36.37" W

This river beach, set in the heart of the north-eastern Algarve countryside, has formed at a pretty pool in the Cadavais Stream, one of the River Guadiana's tributaries. Light-coloured sand, unusual for a riverside setting such as this, was brought here from the coast. The beach also offers sports areas and a picnic ground, set in gardens where poplars, oleander, lavender and exuberant flower beds of roses stand out. The banks of the pool are covered in reeds and the occasional fruit tree. The leisure facilities at

the beach and the calm peaceful waters of the pool, with temperatures reaching 30° in the summer, attract increasing numbers of visitors to this river beach. Throughout the dry season, and as a result of evaporation, the water plane may suffer variations. The quality of the water, however, usually remains good throughout the summer holiday season. This is a very tranquil, rural setting, where the chirping of the birds and the sounds of the bells worn by the animals provide a kind of background music.



Road access is by tarmacked road from the town of Alcoutim, crossing the bridge on the Cadavais Stream and heading towards the left bank for about 500 metres. There is a medium-sized organised car park. Support infrastructures include a restaurant, WC and information facilities and there are lifeguards on duty in the summer holiday season. This is an accessible beach. Orientation: south-west.



AUTOCHTHONOUS

(≡ NATIVE)

The word used to describe a species or plant variety that originates in a specific geographical region. /

BARROCAL

(≡ LIMESTONE ALGARVE)

A strip of carbonate land located in the central section of the Algarve between the *Serra* (uplands) and the Coast, where typical plants grow, some of them exclusive to the territory. /

BIO-CALCARENITE

Rocks made up of sand with fossilised shells held together by carbonate cement. /

BIVALVES

A class of mollusc protected by a pair of hinged shells, such as mussels or clams. /

CALCARENITE

Sedimentary rock made up of sand held together by carbonate cement. /

CARBONATE ROCKS

Basic rocks (pH > 7) essentially made up of carbonates. They are very vulnerable to contact with water, which tends to dissolve or erode them. /

DRY ORCHARDS

Crops that do not need to be watered. /

ENDEMIC

The word used to describe a species or plant variety that is only found in the specific geographical region to which it is native. /

EROSION

A phenomenon that results in the alteration and modelling of the landscape due to the erosive activity of external agents such as wind, water, ice and living beings. /

HALOPHYTES

Plant species that have adapted to highly-saline habitats. /

INTERTIDAL

The strip of shore that lies between the highest and lowest tide marks and which is colonised by biological communities adapted to the specific conditions of this habitat. /

KARST

Karst topography is a landscape formed in limestone regions as a result of soluble rocks being dissolved by surface and underground water. /

LIANA

(≡ CREEPERS)

Climbing plants that grow on other plants, especially trees and bushes. /

LICHENS

A biological symbiosis between a fungus and seaweed, wherein both benefit from living together; these organisms are indicative of atmospheric quality. /

LIMESTONE

Rock that is essentially made up of calcium carbonate. /

LIMESTONE PAVEMENTS

There are a type of limestone relief that, as a result of erosion, have deep grooves and scores on their surface. /

MARL

Sedimentary rock comprising calcium carbonate and clay in similar proportions. /

MARSHLAND

Alluvium land that is periodically flooded with salt water and colonised by halophyte plants. They are ecosystems of great ecological importance. /

MELLIFEROUS PLANTS

This is the collective name for plants that produce substances which can be turned into honey. /

MICROMAMMALS

Small mammals such as mice and shrews. /

NESTING

The time of year when birds build their nests to lay their eggs. /

QUARTZ

A silicon-based mineral that is very abundant on Earth and is resistant to erosion. /

RAVINE

A gully or riverbed carved out by running water. /

SANDSTONE

A sedimentary rock comprised of grains of sand held together by siliciclastic or carbonate cement. /

SCHIST

A metamorphic rock which consists of parallel layers that give it a layered look, like slates. /

SEA CLIFF

A steep coastal slope created by the erosive action of the sea. /

SEA SPRAY

A sea wind carrying droplets of salt water. /

SINKHOLE

A natural well that forms in limestone rocks, forming a connection between the surface and underground caves. /

UNDERGROWTH

Vegetation consisting of shrubs and other plants that grows along the forest floor, in scrubland and in woods; collectively, the plants growing under the canopy of the trees. /

VEIN

A type of deposit of eruptive plutonic rock that is very thin in proportion to its length. /

WADERS

The collective name given to birds that live in habitats with muddy soils. The shape of their beaks enables them to dig for food in mud flats and swampy areas. /



FLAGS ON THE BEACHES



RED FLAG

Bathing and swimming are forbidden.



YELLOW FLAG

Swimming is forbidden but bathing is permitted with caution.



GREEN FLAG

Bathing and swimming are permitted.



CHEQUERED FLAG

The beach is temporarily unsupervised by lifeguards.



BLUE FLAG

A symbol of quality awarded to beaches that stand out in terms environmental and safety conditions.



ACCESSIBLE BEACH

A symbol awarded to beaches that offer access and equipment specifically adapted for people with limited mobility.

FLORA

African tamarisk
Tamarix africana

Almond tree
Prunus dulcis

Asparagus
Asparagus spp.



Bridal veil broom
Retama monosperma

Carob tree
Ceratonia siliqua



Century plant
Agave americana

Common fig
Ficus carica

Common gum cistus
Cistus ladanifer



Common myrtle
Myrtus communis

Common reed
Phragmites australis



Cork oak
Quercus suber



Cottonweed
Othanthus maritimus



Cretan trefoil
Lotus creticus



Dwarf palm
Chamaerops humilis



European beach grass
Ammophila arenaria



Gold coin daisy
Asteriscus maritimus



Heather
Erica spp.

Iceplant
Carpobrotus edulis



Kermes oak
Quercus coccifera



Lavender
Lavandula sp.



Lianas
Smilax aspera and *Lonicera implexa*



Maltese mushroom
Cynomorium coccineum

Maritime pine
Pinus pinaster

Mastic
Pistacia lentiscus



Mediterranean saltbush
Atriplex halimus



Mediterranean saltwort
Salsola vermiculata



Mediterranean thyme

Thymra capitata



Oleander

Nerium oleander

Olive tree

Olea europaea

Wild olive tree

Olea europaea var. sylvestris

Orchids

Ophrys spp.



"Perpétua-das-areias"

Helichrysum picardii



Phoenician juniper

Juniperus turbinata



Poplar

Populus sp.

Portuguese thyme

Thymus carnosus

Rockrose

Tuberaria major



Rushes

Juncus maritimus and Juncus acutus

Sage-leaved rockrose

Cistus salvifolius



Samphire

Crithmum maritimum



Sand couch-grass

Elymus farctus



Sea bindweed

Calystegia soldanella



Sea daffodil

Pancratium maritimum



Sea holly

Eryngium maritimum



Sea medick

Medicago marina

Seagrass

Cymodocea nodosa



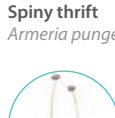
Shrubby sea-blite

Suaeda vera



Spanish broom

Spartium junceum



Spiny thrift

Armeria pungens



Statice

Limonium spp.



Stone pine

Pinus pinea



Strawberry tree

Arbutus unedo



Sweet alyssum
Lobularia maritima



Thyme
Thymus lotocephalus

Turquoise Tails sedum
Sedum sediforme



Wrinkle-leaved rockrose
Cistus crispus



FAUNA

MOLLUSCS

Barnacle
Chthamalus sp.



Common cuttlefish
Sepia officinalis

Common octopus
Octopus vulgaris

European flat oyster
Ostrea edulis

Grooved carpet shell
Ruditapes decussatus



Limpet
Patella sp.

Mediterranean mussel
Mytilus galloprovincialis

Whelk
Gibbula spp.

CNIDARIA

Anemones
Anemonia sulcata and
Actinia equina



CRUSTACEANS

Common prawn
Palaemon serratus

Common shore crab
Carcinus maenas

ECHINODERMS

Sea urchin
Paracentrotus lividus

Starfish
Marthasterias glacialis



FISH

Common two-banded sea bream
D. vulgaris

Greater pipefish
Syngnathus acus



Sand smelt
Atherina presbyter

White sea bream
Diplodus sargus



REPTILES

Mediterranean chameleon
Chamaeleon chamaeleon



BIRDS

African stonechat
Saxicola torquata

American flamingo
Phoenicopterus ruber

Azure-winged magpie
Cyanopica cyana

Black-headed gull
Larus ridibundus



Black-tailed godwit
Limosa limosa

Black-winged stilt*Himantopus himantopus***Caspian gull***Larus cachinnans***Cattle egret***Bubulcus ibis***Common kingfisher***Alcedo atthis***Eurasian coot***Fulica atra***European bee-eater***Merops apiaster***European shag***Phalacrocorax aristotelis***Great cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo***Grey heron***Ardea cinerea***Hoopoe***Upupa epops***Little egret***Egretta garzetta***Little stint***Calidris minuta***Little tern***Sterna albifrons***Mallard***Anas platyrhynchos***Peregrine falcon***Falco peregrinus***Pied avocet***Recurvirostra avosetta***Plover***Charadrius spp.***Purple swamphen***Porphyrio porphyrio***Rock dove (pigeon)***Columba livia***Ruddy turnstone***Arenaria interpres***Swift***Apus spp.***White stork***Ciconia ciconia*

MAMMALS**Bat***Rhinolophus spp.***Fox***Vulpes vulpes***Otter***Lutra lutra***Rabbit***Oryctolagus cuniculus*



CREDITS

Edition and Copyright

Algarve Tourism Board
turismoalgarve@turismoalgarve.pt
www.visitalgarve.pt

Head Office: Av. 5 de Outubro, 18
8000-076 Faro, Algarve, Portugal
Telephone: 289 800 400
Fax: 289 800 489

Coordination

Communications and Image
marketing@turismoalgarve.pt

Flora and fauna – texts, images and illustrations

Ana Paula de Sousa Gaspar

Translation

Inpokulis

Photography

Hélio Ramos - cover, contents, pages: 2-6, 8-29, 31,
33-37, 41-45, 46 top, 47-51, 57-63, 65, 66, 69-73,
74 bottom, 77-79, 80 top, 81, 82, 86, 89-91, 96-103,
105 top, 106-109, 110 top, 111-115, 119 top,
120-128, 131-135, 139, 143, 144, 147-151, 156-159,
163, 165 top, 166, 169, 176.

iSpot Multimédia, Lda - pages: 7, 30, 32, 38, 39,
46 bottom, 52, 55, 56, 64, 74 top, 80 bottom, 83-85,
92, 95, 104, 105 bottom, 110 bottom, 116, 119 bottom,
140-142, 152, 155, 160, 164, 165 bottom.

Graphic Design and Layout

NEWINGS design agency

Printing

Print run

Legal Deposit Number

nº 377722/14

Second Edition

2014

algarve.
europe's
most famous
secret

