



algarve



taste the difference
culture



CAFE REGIONAL ARTESANATO

Relaxing on a seaside *café* terrace, savouring the delights of a traditional restaurant, or enjoying the simple charms of a fisherman's tavern, are just some of the ways to appreciate the best that the Algarve has to offer. Choose your own favourite backdrop and set out to discover just why the Algarve's gastronomy enjoys such renown. Charcoal-grilled fish or a '*cataplana*' of shellfish are just a few of the options that match the most special of holiday moments. And the pleasures of the Algarve are only just starting.

Discover the broad sweep of the rich cultural and historical legacy, bestowed upon the region by civilisations such as the Moors and the Romans. Such memories can be traced through the monuments, traditions, architecture and, of course, all the habits and customs of the people of the Algarve, with their well-deserved reputation for warm welcomes and fine hospitality.





a little history

A chosen place of settlement for many different peoples, the Algarve derives its name from the Moors who baptised the region the *Al-Gharb*, meaning “The West”. This is but one clear example of the **rich cultural heritage** that the Moors left dotted across this region. The castles, fortresses, churches, narrow roads and lacework-patterned chimneys are some of the other landmarks that have survived the passage of history. From the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians and the Romans, the Algarve received further valuable legacies. The ruins at *Milreu*, in *Estói*, and the *Cerro da Vila* Roman Villa, in *Vilamoura*, are good examples of Roman civilisation and come fully equipped with visitor centres that illustrate the realities of everyday life many centuries ago.



The golden age of the Portuguese Voyages of Discovery placed the Algarve at the centre of some of the key events in those great adventures that opened up new worlds to the West. Setting sail from *Lagos* and *Sagres* were the caravels of Prince Henry the Navigator and explorers such as *Gil Eanes*, a renowned Algarvian honoured for his daring feats.

With its landscape enriched by such history, the Algarve has progressed in modern times, subtly preserving this fine blend of different forms of knowledge and culture.





The history of the Algarve is experienced through its castles, walls, churches, and all its traditional houses embellished with their fine windows and chimneys.



Made in Can



traditions

Influenced by a diverse range of cultures, the Algarve has blended the habits of its people with the customs imported from many far-off destinations. Such an approach has resulted in the **rich Algarve art and handicraft**. The studios and workshops of artists and craftsmen produce the wide variety of articles that you will find on display in craft shops across the region. They feature all the truly impressive regional range of articles made of copper, wrought iron, wood, cork, ceramic, tile and clay, in addition to all the basketwork, delightful examples of bone lace, coverlets, and rag or jute dolls – the famous *Martinlongo* dolls.

In architecture, the lacework-patterned chimneys, fascias and roof terraces serve as testimony to the heritage of popular artistic styles.

Music and dancing merge in local **folklore** traditions and express all that is most authentic in Algarve culture. The '*baile mandado*' with its spoken steps, the twirling '*baile de rodd*' and the contagious pace of the '*corridinho*' are some of the most popular dances in the Algarve, enjoyed by both local people and visitors alike.



festivals and religious celebrations

Festivals and religious celebrations are public expressions of the bonds that still bind modern Algarve to its roots. Throughout the region, **ancient traditions** are still celebrated in recognition of the fruits of both the land and the sea. The Fisherman's Festival in *Albufeira*, with its century-old traditional games, is an event held in honour of the men that sail out from these shores. The Seafood Festival in *Olhão* and the Sardine Festival in *Portimão* are two of the leading gastronomic events that further evoke the ties with the sea and the longstanding fishing traditions of the Algarve people.

The *Mãe Soberana* (Sovereign Mother) Festival in *Loulé* and the Hallelujah Festival – including the procession of Flowered Torches – in *São Brás de Alportel* are two of the largest religious festivals in the Algarve and fill the streets with processions and religious music. The Nights of the Enchanted Moorish Maiden in *Cacela Velha*, the Mediaeval Days in *Castro Marim* and the 16th-century Fair held in *Lagos* recreate scenes and events from times long gone.



To experience the Algarve at its best, you have to try its cuisine. Made from ingredients harvested from the sea and the inland hills, the gastronomy of the Algarve is based on the simplicity of great knowledge. Highland stews are served in clay bowls, whilst fish is slowly grilled over charcoal and shellfish prepared in copper 'cataplana' pans. Cuttlefish with ink, whelk bean stew, corn mash, boiled chickpeas, hare soup and braised partridge are all to be numbered amongst the many fine dishes being cooked in family-run restaurants across the region.

flavours of tradition

To accompany these Algarve specialities you can choose from amongst the best in Portugal's list of fine wines. And as an aperitif, or as a great way to end a good meal, try the renowned "aguardente de medronho" (arbutus-berry brandy) from Monchique, or the local fruit and honey liqueurs produced according to ancient recipes.

As regards sweets, the almonds, figs, oranges and carobs grown across the Algarve provide the core ingredients for the delicious 'Dom Rodrigues', almond-based 'morgados', fig cheesecakes and high-quality jams and sweets that, with all their rich colours, decorate the windows of pastry stores. And the Easter 'folares', or the Christmas 'filhoses', 'empanadilhas' and other fried sweet pastries are seasonal delights that will certainly be found at any of these celebrations.

Itineraries



Albufeira



The historic *Cerro da Vila* still preserves its picturesque beauty with its tightly huddled white houses, steep narrow streets and the impressive Moorish arch in the *Travessa da Igreja Velha*, where a mosque and the town's first church once stood.



The Festival of *Nossa Senhora da Orada* (Our Lady of Orada) is held during August and features a procession in which a statue of the Virgin Mary is transported on a fisherman's boat from the *Nossa Senhora da Orada* Chapel, near the *Albufeira Marina*, over to *Pescadores* beach. In September, the Fisherman's Festival pays due homage to these men of the sea with a flourish of traditional games, folk dancing and musical performances, and the very best in the region's cuisine.

Alcoutim



Perched up above the *River Guadiana*, *Alcoutim* Castle looks out over the surrounding countryside and affords some very impressive views. Archaeological excavations on the hill have determined that there were human settlements here as far back as pre-history.




The *Alcoutim* Festivals, held in September, are five days and five nights packed with festivities and everything ranging from traditional games, music and sport to countless other activities along various themes.



Aljezur





Standing atop a small hill, the castle walls are the symbol of the constant struggle between Moors and Christians for these lands. The convent, built on top of a slope overlooking the river, ensured the control and defence of the river port that provided a link with the sea and guaranteed the town's survival. Its walls now provide visitors with some remarkable panoramic views.

-  The Sweet Potato and Gooseneck Barnacle Festival, held in October and November, seeks to promote two products symbolising the close connections between the people of *Aljezur* and both the land and the sea: the sweet potato and gooseneck barnacles.



Castro Marim

-  The significant expanse of the old castle may date back to the Moors given its distinctive circular turrets in each corner and two entranceways. The castle now provides spectacular views out over the town and surrounding countryside as far as the River *Guadiana*, the salt pans and the sea.
-  In September, throughout its Mediaeval Days, *Castro Marim* is turned into a mediaeval stage where the Middle Ages are brought back to life. Events include tournaments, games, cultural performances and various depictions of day-to-day life during those times.



Faro

-  The historic centre of *Faro* incorporates the *Vila Adentro* within whose walls lies the Town Arch, Castle, Municipal Hall, Episcopal Palace and Cathedral. Finished in carved and gilded woodwork, fine tile panels, paintings and sculptures, the Cathedral is a sumptuous piece of religious architecture that attracts many visitors. Elsewhere, in the small town of *Estói*, the Milreu Roman ruins are an expressive testimony to the Roman presence in this region. The ruins date back to the 1st to 3rd centuries with other mediaeval remains from the 16th century also to be found on this site.
-  In the past, muleteers would set off from here to take products from the Algarve northwards and across the hills, where they had to fear both accident and robbery. On their return, they would thank *Nossa Senhora do Pé da Cruz* (Our Lady of the Foot of the Cross) for their safe journey. This tradition has lived on in the Pine-Cone Festival held in *Estói* every May.

Lagoa

-  On the crest of a hill rising up from the surrounding plain, where once a lagoon is believed to have existed, stands a church tower and a maze of houses, mostly shining bright white. This is *Lagoa*, where the Manueline windows framed in blue and the observation turret of its convent ensure that time has most pleasantly stood still. In *Ferraguda*, the *São João de Arade* Fortress, built during the 17th and 18th centuries, is now a popular viewing point for looking out over the river, at the nearby beaches and the sea beyond.
-  *FATACIL* is the major handicraft, tourism, agriculture, trade and industry fair held annually in the *Lagoa* Municipal Exhibition and Fair Park. This event, taking place in August, further includes a restaurant and refreshment area that incorporates a representative cross-section of the regional cuisine, in addition to an extensive programme of music and entertainment.

Lagos

-  It was from *Lagos* that Prince Henry the Navigator sent out his caravels on their voyages in search of new worlds. The history of that adventure is depicted in a series of monuments including the Governor's Castle, the *Pau da Bandeira* Fortress and the former Slave Market. The *Santo António* Church is another of this city's landmarks. The interior walls are covered in carved and gilded woodwork and the main altar is one of the finest surviving examples of the artistic style that became known as Baroque. This style is also clearly visible in the vaulted roof, the façade and bell towers.
-  The Bath 29 Festival held annually in August remains one of the many important traditions of *Lagos*. The festival starts as a type of ritual celebration of the end of summer. The "*serrenhos*" from the upland hills, descend upon the coast with blankets and picnic baskets in order to spend the night on the beach and go for a swim which, according to tradition, "is worth 29 others".

Loulé



The historic centre of *Loulé* is an essential point of interest for anyone visiting this city. The castle, surrounded by its imposing walls and worked loam turrets, is believed to have been built before the Christian reconquest of these lands, with reconstruction work dating back to the 13th century. The Church of *São Lourenço*, in *Almancil*, is not only home to some of the most important tile panels in Portugal, but also a fine example of the best in Portuguese Baroque architecture.



The *Mãe Soberana* (Sovereign Mother) Festival is one of the largest religious festivals in all of the Algarve. On Easter Sunday, the statue of *Nossa Senhora da Piedade* (Our Lady of Mercy) is taken down from the Sanctuary to the Church of *São Francisco* and left on display throughout a two-week period before being returned to the Sanctuary.

Monchique



A collection of buildings defining the typical architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries combines with a tree-lined central square to create the calm and relaxing atmosphere of *Caldas de Monchique*. This was where the Romans once decided to build an important spa, now converted into a thermal complex. Well worth a visit are the small glass pavilion enclosing the source of the spring water and the chapel of *Santa Teresa*, with its 18th-century tile panels depicting the life of the saint.



In March, the Traditional Smoked Sausage Fair of *Serra de Monchique* offers the ideal opportunity to taste the very best smoked sausages produced according to traditional methods used for centuries. The atmosphere of the fair does much to recreate the historic rural traditions and further includes exhibitions and sales of all kinds of natural products including honey, local sweets and desserts, arbutus-berry '*medronho*' brandy and home-made bread.

Olhão



The raised terraces are perhaps the best defining landmarks of *Olhão*. And the tower in the Parish Church is arguably the best viewpoint from which to observe the Cubist profile of this town.



The Seafood Festival is considered to be one of the key gastronomic events taking place in the Algarve. The Festival, which takes place in August, is a unique opportunity to taste a whole range of gastronomic specialities prepared from the very best shellfish.

Portimão



Late 19th and early 20th-century architecture has contributed most to defining the style of this historic centre. Two-storey houses show off their wrought-iron balconies, stone-worked windows and doors, decorated with balustrades of stone and ceramics and walls covered with tiles.

Along with the *São João de Arade* Fort in *Ferragudo*, the *Santa Catarina* de Ribamar Fortress, a favourite vantage point in the town, ensured the defence of both *Portimão* and its port against attack by corsairs and pirates. Inside is a small chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

The archaeological remains of *Portimão* include both *Abicada*, a Roman archaeological site dating from the 1st to the 4th century and situated at the point where two streams meet, and *Alcalar*, an important necropolis from the Neolithic and Calcolithic periods (2000/1600 B.C.).



During the month of August, *Portimão* hosts the Sardine Festival, a great opportunity to taste the finest of grilled sardines, accompanied by lots of music and other entertainment.

São Brás de Alportel



Every street reveals the popular architectural style of the houses, with their façades embellished with tiles, worked stone and wrought-iron balconies, all finely representing the opulence generated by the cork industry. In their midst stand the Episcopal Palace and the António Bentes Cultural Centre/Algarvian Costume Ethnographic Museum – located in the residence of a former muleteer who grew rich in the cork trade. Both of them merit close attention.



During the Hallelujah Festival – an ocean of torches bedecked with flowers in every possible colour – a deafening chant can be heard "He came back to life as He said He would, Hallelujah, Hallelujah", perhaps the most defining moment of the procession that marks the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. Each year, prizes are awarded to the most traditional and most artistic torches.

Silves



Silves Castle is without doubt the most beautiful military monument left from the Moorish period of Portuguese history. The *Sé Velha*, the former cathedral, built from the regional red sandstone, is a particular landmark in the romantic landscape that defines the profile of *Silves*.

The Pillory, a symbol of municipal power, was rebuilt from remains dating back to the 16th century and is a unique example of its type in the Algarve. Furthermore, the *Cruz de Portugal* (Portuguese Cross) is one of the finest of its kind, displaying Christ crucified on one side and the *Mater Dolorosa* on the other. The base dates back to 1824.



In August, a Mediaeval Fair is held in the heart of the historic centre of *Silves*. For several days, the period of the Middle Ages is recreated, with all its charms and defining personalities. Over in *Armação de Pêra*, the same month welcomes the *Festival of Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes* (Our Lady of Navigators), which reaches its high point with a night-time procession of richly decorated and illuminated boats on the sea.

Tavira



From the Castle, there is an attractive view of the countryside around *Tavira* and its surrounding region. The two halves of the city are joined together by the bridge over the River *Gilão*. The narrow, twisting streets are lined with white houses topped with quite distinctive scissor-shaped roofs, and dotted amongst them are numerous churches and the *Misericórdia* Arch.



In April, the *Serra de Tavira* Festival presents a broad selection of the traditional crafts and products originating from the hills of the *Serra do Caldeirão* and *Serra de Tavira*, offering a unique experience of entertainment combined with the flavours of the mountains.

Vila Real de Santo António



To best appreciate the Pombaline urban layout of *Vila Real de Santo António*, take a calm stroll along its streets. The best place to start is in *Praça Marquês de Pombal*, in the heart of the city, where the stone pavement radiates out from the obelisk erected in 1776. This square contains three of the town's most important 18th-century buildings: the church, the town hall and the former guardhouse.



In July, throughout the four Nights of the Enchanted Moorish Maiden, *Cacela Velha* returns to the period from the 10th to the 13th century, with a traditional souk market, folklore, live music, oriental dancing, craft exhibitions, conferences and the chance to taste the culinary delights of those times.

Vila do Bispo



Set against the mythical backdrop of the headlands of *Sagres* and *Cabo de São Vicente* are the remnants of pre-historic settlements, as well as a clear evocation of the great prosperity of Portugal's epic period of discovery.

In the Fortress of *Sagres*, with its imposing wind compass, you can find the last remains of the *Vila do Infante*, the logistical settlement and starting point for the voyages of discovery. Close to *Raposeira* is the chapel of *Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe), where, according to tradition, Prince Henry would say his prayers before setting sail on the high seas. An obligatory point of passage for ships heading to the Mediterranean, the *Cabo de São Vicente* was the setting for a series of important naval battles. As the burial site for the body of Saint Vincent, it was to become a place of pilgrimage for several centuries.



The *Festa da Padroeira Nossa Senhora da Graça* (the Festival of Our Lady of Grace) is held in *Sagres* in August and is both a religious and a secular celebration. The sea procession sees a flotilla of boats heading out as far as the headland of *Cabo de São Vicente*.



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