

# guide to algarve's walking trails



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# An immense Algarve to discover

If you enjoy hiking, being in contact with nature, discovering new things and if you have a spirit of adventure, then you'll certainly find this "Guide to Algarve's Walking Trails", edited by Turismo do Algarve, to be useful. The mild, markedly Mediterranean climate, with more than 300 days of sunshine a year, allows you to enjoy any of these trails at any time you want. The only essentials you'll need are proper footwear, light, season-appropriate clothing and a small backpack. Don't forget your camera, of course, so you can record the many unique moments you'll experience. Bring your binoculars, too, to focus on any details too far for the naked eye. Venturing outdoors, across mountains, woods, dunes, cliffs, lakes and rivers is an enriching experience that more and more visitors are looking for. They long to discover a territory that offers far more than its famous sandy shores and summer beaches. The Algarve's landscape diversity is undisputable, as is the richness of its natural and built heritage and the scope of its traditions. There are far more paths than you can count, be they dirt, asphalt, cobbled footpaths or wooden walkways.

In the 47 trails that make up this Guide, the landscape can change from place to place. Wetlands, freshwater lakes and marshes subject to the whim of the tides contrast with dryland fields where almond, carob or fig trees proliferate. Walking by old mills and barns, witnesses of the region's agricultural past, brings to mind the fishermen catching bivalves along the coast. In between, the many white houses and narrow streets of the villages, which still maintain their traditional urban layout. Depending on the trail, you might see aquatic birds or birds of prey on the horizon. Or wild rabbits may cross your path.

This is what the Algarve is. These varied experiences, coupled with the hospitality of the people, their cuisine and cultural heritage. All of this makes the region a tourist destination of excellence, far more than the ever-appreciated Sun&Sea.

It is a type of tourism, one might say, that aims to always be more sustainable - economically, socially sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. In this regard, nature tourism is one of the basic pillars for an integrated development of the region.

It is up to you, dear reader, to decide whether to start with the Vicentine Coast or the Barrocal, the Serra or the Guadiana. What's important is that you follow it on your own two feet. Get on the road, that's the challenge we leave you with. Enjoy our suggestions, those are our wishes.

**The President of the Algarve Tourism Board**

# Introduction

The Algarve is mainland Portugal's southernmost region. It is bounded to the west and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the north by the Odeceixe river, the ridges of the Serra de Monchique and Caldeirão, and the river Vascão; to the east, the Algarve is separated from Spain by the River Guadiana. Its particular location and the strong influence of the Mediterranean Sea give the region a unique environmental richness, reflected in the immense diversity of landscapes to which the values of nature and human intervention over time have granted special characteristics.

It is therefore fundamental to create conditions to protect the most authentic values of the region, so that diverse and aesthetically attractive landscapes are preserved as areas of bio-cultural balance. As places of attraction and diversification of the Algarve's tourism supply, these landscapes are fundamental for the sustainable development of the territory, as proven by the thousands of tourists who flock to the Region every year to observe nature and discover genuine traditions and different customs.

Hiking, defined as the sporting activity of walking long distances, allows for close contact with nature. It can raise awareness of the importance of protecting natural

and cultural resources, while promoting the well-being and quality of life of those who practice it. This activity is all the more valuable because it can be developed in other aspects, namely at a pedagogical, scientific, recreational and touristic levels.

The "Guide to Algarve's Walking Trails" includes 47 trails, ranging from Small Routes (less than 30 km long) to brief descriptions of Great Routes (trails more than 30 km long) in the region. This selection was made following a survey of the routes, and after carrying out several field trips to validate them. The choice of trails to be included in the guide was based on a number of criteria: the selection of at least one trail or route per municipality, their state of conservation, safety, the existence of promotional material, information boards and signs, the presence of significant natural, scenic and cultural assets, and the existence of any unusual and interesting features.

Small Routes are sorted into five areas: Costa Vicentina, Litoral, Barrocal, Serra and Guadiana. At the end there are summaries of Via Algarviana, Rota Vicentina, Grande Rota do Guadiana and Percurso Descoberta. Before embarking on any Great Routes, it is essential that you consult detailed guides and specific information for each of them, as well as checking their websites.



# Environmental description of the region

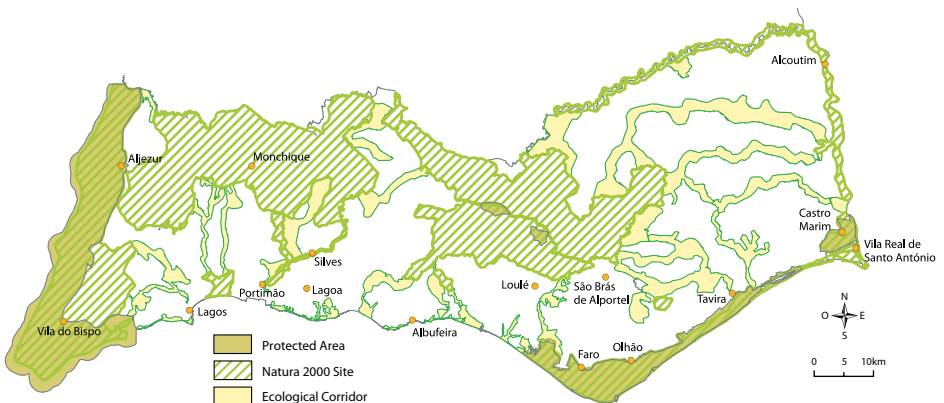
The Algarve is made up of a great diversity of landscapes. Some of its distinguishing aspects include Mediterranean woods and scrublands, oak forests and riparian forests in mountainous areas, karstic environments and dryland orchards in the Barrocal, or cliffs, dune and lagoon systems in the coastal zone.

Much of the territory is occupied by agricultural and forest areas. The existing plant cover is the result of a change in the region's vegetation. It consists mainly of oak forests, especially cork and holm oak, as a direct and indirect result of human activities in the region over thousands of years, but mainly due to changes in the last century. In regards to natural vegetation, the Algarve presents the typical elements of Mediterranean vegetation, with some of its typical species: cork oak, kermes oak, rosemary, mastic tree, flax-leaved daphne, oleander, and the strawberry tree.



Particularly important sites for endemic plants are the Southwest Coast and, in particular, the promontory of Sagres, as well as the upper half of the Serra de Monchique. Regarding cultivated vegetation, there are large stretches of orchards, namely dryland orchards, with olive, carob, fig, and almond trees. Oaks and thickets survive in mountainous areas, as well as large plantations of pine and eucalyptus. As for fauna, the Algarve is specifically rich in animal life, principally vertebrates, as a result of the regions' great diversity of biotopes. Fish such as the Iberian minnow and the Arade chub; reptiles like the Iberian emerald lizard, the chameleon and the Spanish terrapin; mammals such as the Cabrera vole and the wildcat; and birds such as the Western swamphen and Bonelli's eagle are only some of the many species recorded in the Algarve, some of them found only in Portugal or the Iberian Peninsula.

Wetlands, especially the estuarine areas and rias (Ria Formosa, Ria de Alvor, estuary of the river Arade, Guadiana estuary), play a crucial role for fauna, as they sustain important communities of fish. Together with other wetland areas, such as lakes, reed beds, rivers and streams, they attract flocks of nationally and even internationally important species of bird species, either as breeding and wintering grounds or during migrations. The majority of rivers and streams, which interconnect the region's natural areas, are also important ecological corridors, crucial to the survival of fishes, reptiles and amphibians.



Designated protected areas in the Algarve include the Ria Formosa Natural Park, the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park (part of which is located in the region), the Castro Marim and Vila Real de Santo António Wetlands Nature Reserve, and the Rocha da Pena and Fonte da Benémola Protected Local Landscapes. With 14 Natura 2000 sites, approximately 38 per cent of the Algarve's total area enjoys conservation status, a testament to its importance for conservation and landscape at a European level. These protected areas and ecological corridors form the Regional Structure for Environmental Protection and Enhancement proposed in the Algarve's Regional Land Management Plan, which lays out the planning and land management guidelines for reconciling nature conservation with human activities, in order to foster the development of nature tourism.

Depending on their location and characteristics, the trails selected for this Guide allow most of the abovementioned natural values to be observed.

## The Algarve's Climate

The region has a markedly Mediterranean climate, with long, warm summers, short and mild winters, a high number of hours of sunshine, and low precipitation throughout the year, concentrated in a few days of autumn and winter. There is some climate variability, as a function of Atlantic influence and altitude, and in recent years there were changes to these patterns, with a higher occurrence of extreme situations (shorter periods of intense precipitation and longer periods with no precipitation at all).





The average temperatures of the Algarve's Sotavento (eastern) coastline and centre region are the highest in the country, at around 18 °C. This is also where average maximum temperatures above 30 °C and periods of the day above 40 °C are recorded during the summer months. During the summer, too, the Sotavento coastline often reaches high minimum temperatures, at or above 20 °C, in the so-called tropical nights. As a result of a more pronounced Atlantic influence, the Barlavento (western) coastline and the Costa Vicentina, invaded by maritime sea masses from the southwest, have relatively lower temperatures. Climatic variability is greater in the hills, particularly near the top of the Espinhaço de Cão, Monchique and Caldeirão mountains, with a sub-humid-to-humid tendency in the western sector and a continental dryness in the Guadiana basin.

Precipitation is often torrential, and occurs mainly between October and February. There are sunny days even in the winter, usually after rainy days, great for outdoor activities. From June to September there's almost no precipitation.





# Advice for hikers

## Before setting off

### Equipment and clothing to consider bringing with you

- › Hat, sunglasses and sunblock.
- › Suitable footwear for the terrain.
- › Light, season-appropriate clothing.
- › A small, light rucksack for carrying water, light energy-providing snacks, a basic first aid kit, a compass, a torch (in case you find yourself still on the trail after nightfall), a fully charged mobile phone (although the mobile network might not cover some of the more remote areas) and this Guide.
- › Don't forget your camera or binoculars in order to get full benefit from the natural surroundings.

### Other advice

- › Always check the weather forecast before setting out.
- › Check your departure time and confirm whether you can complete the trail before it gets dark.
- › On trails that cross hunting reserves, take care during autumn and winter, particularly on Thursdays, weekends and public holidays. (For further information, contact the ICNF - Instituto de Conservação da Natureza e Florestas)
- › Do not take any unnecessary valuables with you.
- › Never set off unaccompanied on a trail.



Paths in Carrapateira

## When hiking

- › Keep to the signposted trails.
- › When passing through inhabited or agricultural areas, respect local customs, traditions, and property.
- › Respect the rules in protected areas.
- › Avoid unnecessary noise.
- › Never walk over dunes, and do not park on cliff tops.
- › Avoid gathering plants or stones or disturbing the animals.
- › If faced with an aggressive animal, do not run. Keep walking.
- › Never light fires.
- › It is advisable to stop from time to time for a light snack or a drink of water.

- › Please do not leave litter behind. Take it away with you and leave it at the nearest refuse collection service.
- › Be mindful of your surroundings.

## Emergency contacts

- › General emergency number - 112
- › Fire alert - 117
- › SOS Ambiente e Território - 808 200 520
- › SEPNA - Serviço de Proteção da Natureza e do Ambiente da GNR - 217 503 080

# Trail information

**Name:** name of the trail.

**Civil parish(es) / municipality / location:** administrative area(s) where the trail is located.

**Local:** location or place.

**How to get there:** information on how to get to the trail.

**Type of trail :** circular, linear.

**Starting point:** information about the starting point.

**Distance:** total distance covered (including coming and going in linear paths).

**Average duration:** calculated taking into account the nature of the trail (distance, terrain, altimetry).

**Cumulative elevation:** the sum of every gain in elevation, in meters, throughout the entire trail. In linear trails, the direction of the walk can represent very different accumulated ascents (and descents).

**Type of path:** earth, gravel, sand, asphalt, etc ...

**When to visit:** recommended season for the trail, depending on its characteristics and foreseeable climatic conditions.

**Approval:** indicates whether the trail has been awarded the approval mark of the Portuguese Camping and Mountaineering Federation. The approval marks and signs of the approved routes are:

## Small Route (PR)



*Right way*



*Wrong way*



*Change of direction (left)*



*Small and Great Route*

### Great Route (GR)



*Right way*



*Wrong way*



*Change of direction (right)*

**Signposted:** whether there are signs on the trail, such as information boards and signposts. In some cases, particularly on beaches, only information boards are provided.

**Special interest features:** integration in protected areas, the existence of support infrastructures, or any additional information which could be useful to walkers.

**Points of interest:** natural or cultural values relevant to hikers.

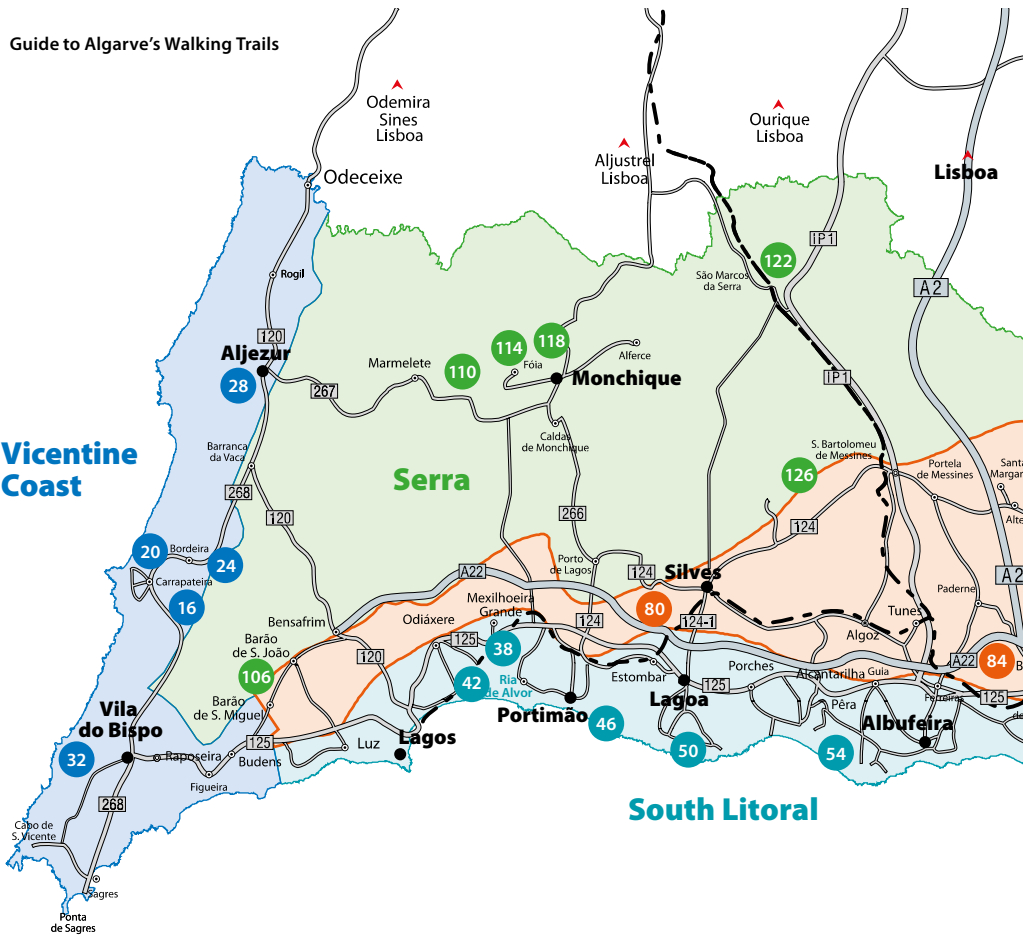
**Owners:** if the route totally or partially crosses into private and / or public land.

**Responsible party:** entities or persons responsible for the trail.

**Remarks:** additional information, such as the possibility of following the trail by other means (mountain biking, for example, or horse riding) or passing through hunting areas.

**Description:** description of the trail and any significant natural or cultural values.

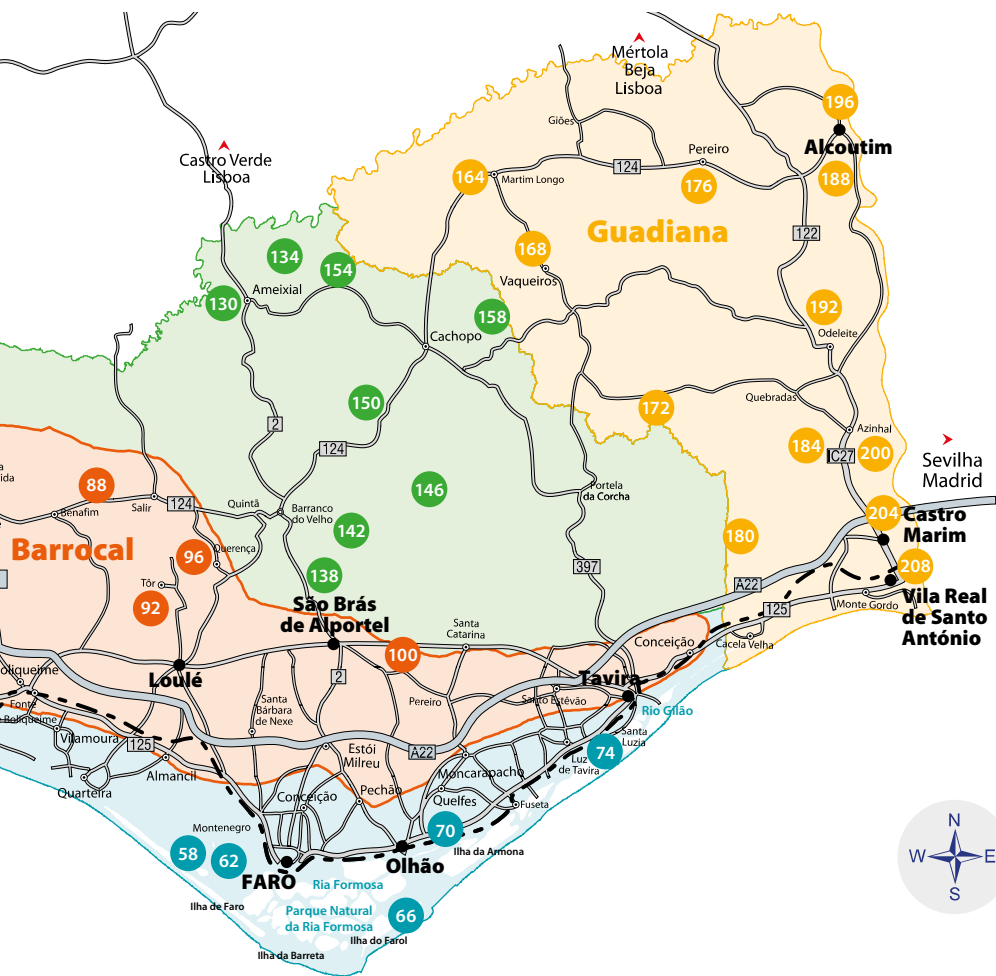
Vicentine Coast



# map-index of the trails

*Note: the numbering of the trails corresponds to the page numbers they're inserted in.*

- 16. Cerros da Carrapateira
- 20. From Bordeira to the Sea
- 24. Endiabrada and the Hidden Lakes
- 28. Cultural and Environmental Circuit of Aljezur
- 32. Castelejo Nature Trail
- 38. The Delicate Rock
- 42. At the Whim of the Tides
- 46. Caminho dos Promontórios
- 50. Seven Hanging Valleys Trail
- 54. Praia Grande Interpretation Trail
- 58. São Lourenço Trail
- 62. Ludo Trails
- 66. Culatra Island
- 70. Marim Centre of Environmental Education Walking Trail
- 74. Barril Beach Trail
- 80. Municipal Park of Sítio das Fontes Trail
- 84. Paderne Castle Trail
- 88. Rocha da Pena Trail
- 92. The Tôr Trail
- 96. Fonte da Benémola Trail
- 100. Caminhos e Cruzilhadas de ir à Fonte



- 106. Pedra do Galo Trail
- 110. Waterfall Trail
- 114. Fóia Trail
- 118. Trail of the Windmills
- 122. Lagoão Trail
- 126. Vilarinha – Vale Fuzeiros  
Archaeological Circuit
- 130. Ameixial Pedestrian Trail
- 134. Revezes Pedestrian Trail
- 138. Ribeira de Alportel Trail
- 142. O *Ninho* Ornithological Tour
- 146. Barranco das Lajes
- 150. Reserva Trail
- 154. Masmorra Trail
- 158. Montes Serranos Trail

- 164. Living Memory
- 168. Uphill, downhill
- 172. Amendoeira Trail
- 176. Caminhos da Fonte
- 180. Boa Vista Trail
- 184. Beliche Circuit
- 188. Ladeiras do Pontal
- 192. Terras da Ordem Trail
- 196. The Charms of Alcoutim
- 200. A Window to the Guadiana
- 204. Venta Moinhos Salt Marsh Trail
- 208. Passeio Pombalino







## Trails

- 16. Cerros da Carrapateira
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- 28. Cultural and Environmental Circuit of Aljezur
- 32. Castelejo Nature Trail



# 1. Vicentina Coast

# Cerros da Carrapateira



Panoramic view over the coast and Bordeira beach

**Civil Parish:** Bordeira

**Municipality:** Aljezur

**Location:** Carrapateira

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) to Lagos, then take the N125 to Vila do Bispo. From there, head north by the N268, to Carrapateira.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 13,2 km

**Average duration:** 3h30m to 4h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 400 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park and in the Rota Vicentina.

**Points of interest:** landscape and panoramic views. Plants and wildlife on the ravines leading to the Vilarinha valley. Agricultural fields and rural tourism.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Rota Vicentina

**Remarks:** the trail goes through timberlands.



Vilarinha's valley and village



Ravine access to Vilarinha village

The hike takes you through rolling landscapes of valleys, ravines and hills, offering panoramic views over the coastline, the villages of Carrapateira and Vilarinha and the Monchique mountain.

**A** – Starting on Carrapateira, the trail follows along open fields, pastures and low scrublands, on which you can see the colourful *Ononis ramosissima*. Here you'll find jackdaws and a few birds of prey. Climbing up the first hill you can see the Amado beach and the vast dunes of Carrapateira.

**B** – The landscape rolls on, now covered in stone pines, as well as an undergrowth abundant with cistus, lavender, gorse and the exuberant, yellow-leaved broom.

**C** – After crossing the N268 and climbing up again, you'll see the Vilarinha valley and, beyond it, Monchique mountain, with 902 m of altitude at its highest point, the Fóia.

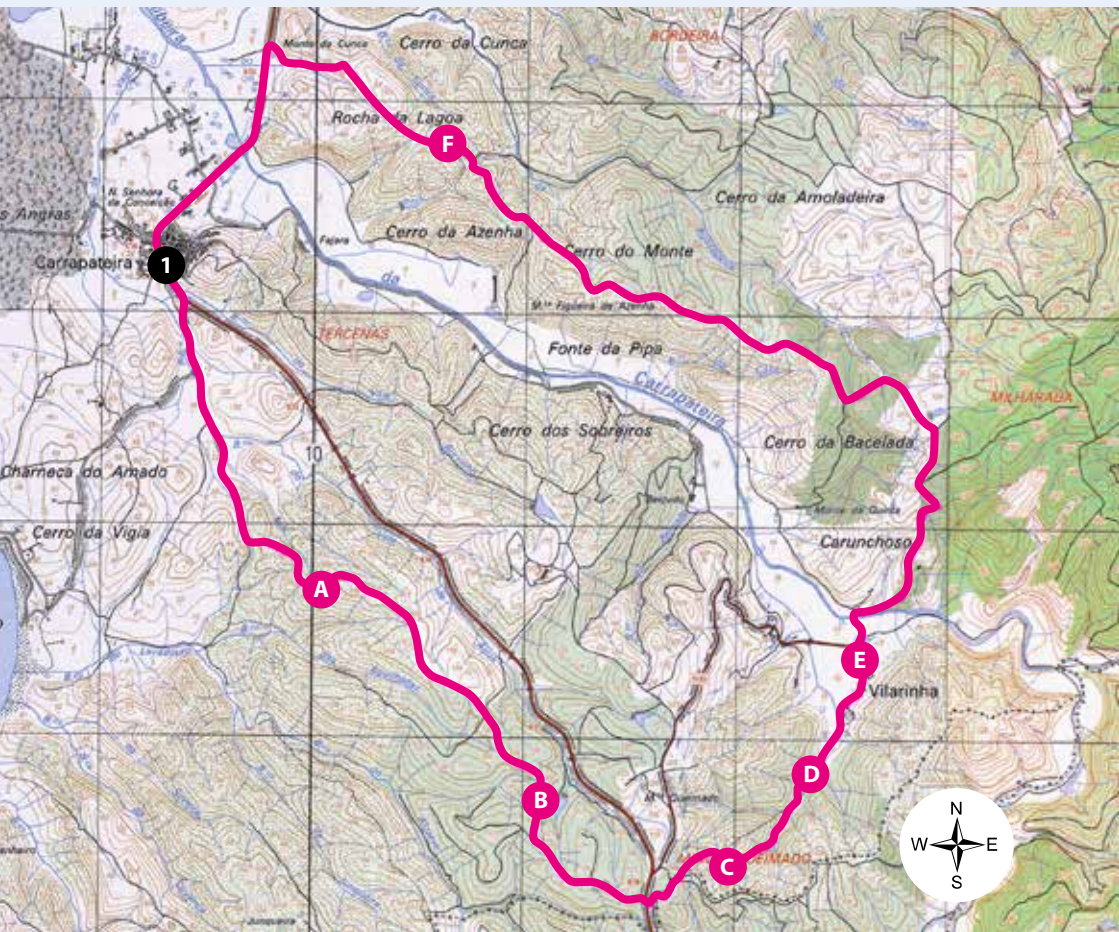
**D** – A footpath leads down to the Vilarinha

valley, nestled into a ravine covered with beautiful woods of cork oaks and strawberry trees. In the thick scrubland you'll find groves of heather, rockrose, brambles and lianas like the aromatic honeysuckle. The air hums with the songs of different birds: nuthatches, nightingales, woodpeckers, and others.

**E** – You'll cross the agricultural valley still teeming with fruit trees and agricultural fields. Nowadays, in the village of Vilarinha, rural tourism exists side-by-side with cattle pastures.

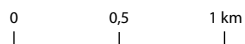
**F** – Climb onto the northern hill through a path lined with stone pines and cistus. You'll leave the wide Vilarinha valley and its oak-covered hills behind you. Following the crest line, you'll find a series of valleys and hills, until your eyes settle on the sea and the vast dunes of the Carrapateira.

# Cerros da Carrapateira



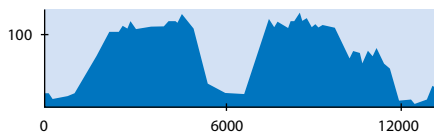
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 01.00" N 8° 53' 43.14" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# From Bordeira to the Sea



Pastures in the Bordalete hill. Signage for choosing the longest or shortest trail

**Civil Parish:** Bordeira

**Municipality:** Aljezur

**Location:** Bordeira

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) to Lagos, then take the N125 to Vila do Bispo. From there, head north by the N268, to Carrapateira.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 13,5 km (or 6 km in alternative)

**Average duration:** 4h to 4h30m (or 2h)

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 325 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt and sand paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located at the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park and is part of the Rota Vicentina.

**Points of interest:** Bordalete pine forest, fields of dunes on top of the cliffs, geological outcrops, views over the coastline.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Rota Vicentina

**Remarks:** you can choose to walk on a trail of only 6 km, by following the signs on Bordalete hill at km 3,5. The stretches along the coast and in the Bordalete pine forest are very sandy.



Bordeira beach as seen from the cliffs

The path crosses the Bordeira valley, the ancestral Bordaleta pine forest and a field of dunes on top of the cliff over the beach, where you can let yourself be surprised by the plant life exclusive to this coast.

**A** – Starting from the charismatic village of Bordeira, you'll walk through the sparse scrubland on the sunny slopes and the reeds and bulrushes on the wetlands. The riverside gallery forms a leafy corridor of poplar trees, ash trees, willows and brambles, inhabited by a diverse wildlife. The wetlands are used as pasture for cattle on the Bordaleta hill.

**B** – Climbing up to the coastal platform, you'll reach the Mesquita's geodesic landmark. From here, your sight will travel along the coastline, north to the black schist bay of Arrifana, and south to the light-coloured limestone of Pontal da Carrapateira. Looking closer, you can see a low, wind-swept scrubland of gum rockrose.

**C** – Along the Carratapeira cliff, there's a striking field of dunes, teeming with rare plants. As examples we have the *Stauracanthus vicentinus* and *Astragalus vicentinus*, or the aromatic *Teucrium vicentinum* and *Thymus camphoratus*, known in Portuguese as tomilho-canforado or tomilho-de-Sagres, names alluding to the Vicentine Coast. Strong aromas blend in the air: plants like these and others like the curry plant, the juniper, the Spanish lavender, the corema, and the *Halimium halimifolium*, adapted to the dry conditions and the sea winds, produce oils and resins to prevent water loss.



*Astragale de Marseille (Astragalus vicentinus)*.  
Endemic to the Costa Vicentina, confined to the coastline between Sagres and Bordeira beach

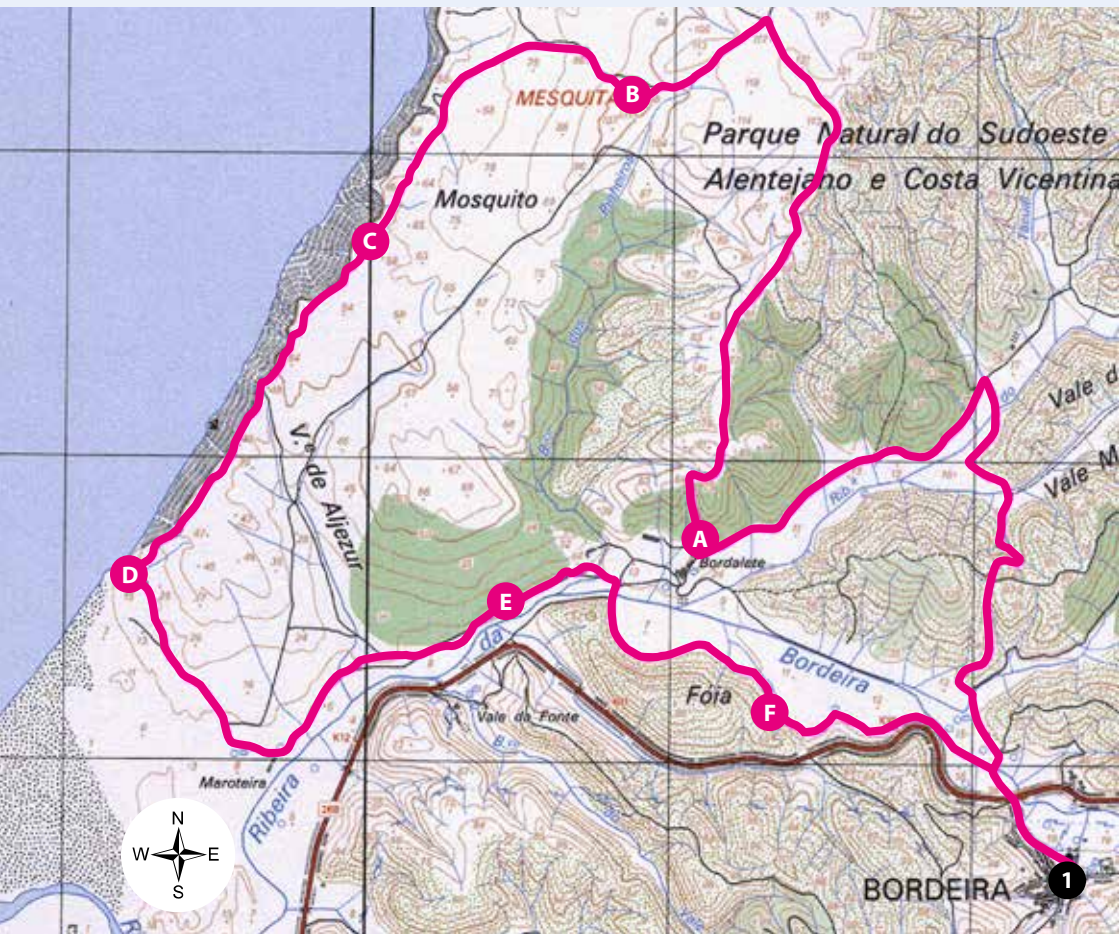
**D** – In this place, shades of rose take over the usual schist-grey of the cliff; it's the Grés-de-Silves sandstone. Stepping away from the cliff, you can admire the Carrapateira's long stretch of sand and dunes.

**E** – The Bordaleta Pine Forest, with around 40 hectares, was planted to produce pine wood for naval construction. With its monumental stone pines and its location in a migratory corridor, it is also a valuable habitat for birds.

**F** – Back to Bordeira, you'll follow a trail on a foothill of steep slopes, covered in groves of cork oaks and beds of heather, cistus and gorse.

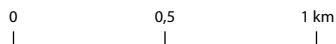


# From Bordeira to the Sea



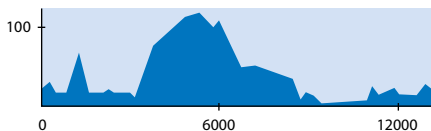
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 46.00" N 8° 51' 39.48" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Endiabrada and the Hidden Lakes



Earth dam lagoon (one of the “hidden lakes”). The shady part of the slope is covered in native oak trees

**Civil Parish:** Bordeira

**Municipality:** Aljezur

**Location:** Bordeira

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) to Lagos, then take the N125 to Vila do Bispo. From there, head north by the N268, to Carrapateira.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 16 km (or 7 km in alternative)

**Average duration:** 5h (or 2h)

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 415 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park and in the Rota Vicentina.

**Points of interest:** well-conserved oak forest and its typical fauna, freshwater wetlands - lagoons and the Bordeira river, riparian vegetation.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Rota Vicentina

**Remarks:** you can choose to hike a trail of only 7 km, by following the signs in Samouqueira, at km 3,7. The trail crosses timberlands.



Pasture in Ribeira da Bordeira's wetlands

This trail explores the countryside of the village of Bordeira, in a journey through time in the rare woods of native vegetation that exist in the Algarve.

**A** – The trail ascends slowly to the Endiabrada (a place where six paths cross), continuing then through a cool, shady forest of cork oaks. The forest floor is covered in beautiful ferns.

**B** – After crossing a stream, the path meanders through a well-preserved valley. Earth dams have created two lakes here. The vegetation becomes lush, both around the lakes and on the dark side of the hills, covered in native oak woodlands which are almost impenetrable due to the amount of ferns and lianas. On the lakeshores, alongside majestic cork oaks, there are willows and ash trees, as well as marsh vegetation like cattails and grass. Along the way, the cork oak woods are joined by heathers, brambles, wild roses and other plants common to the Mediterranean scrubland.

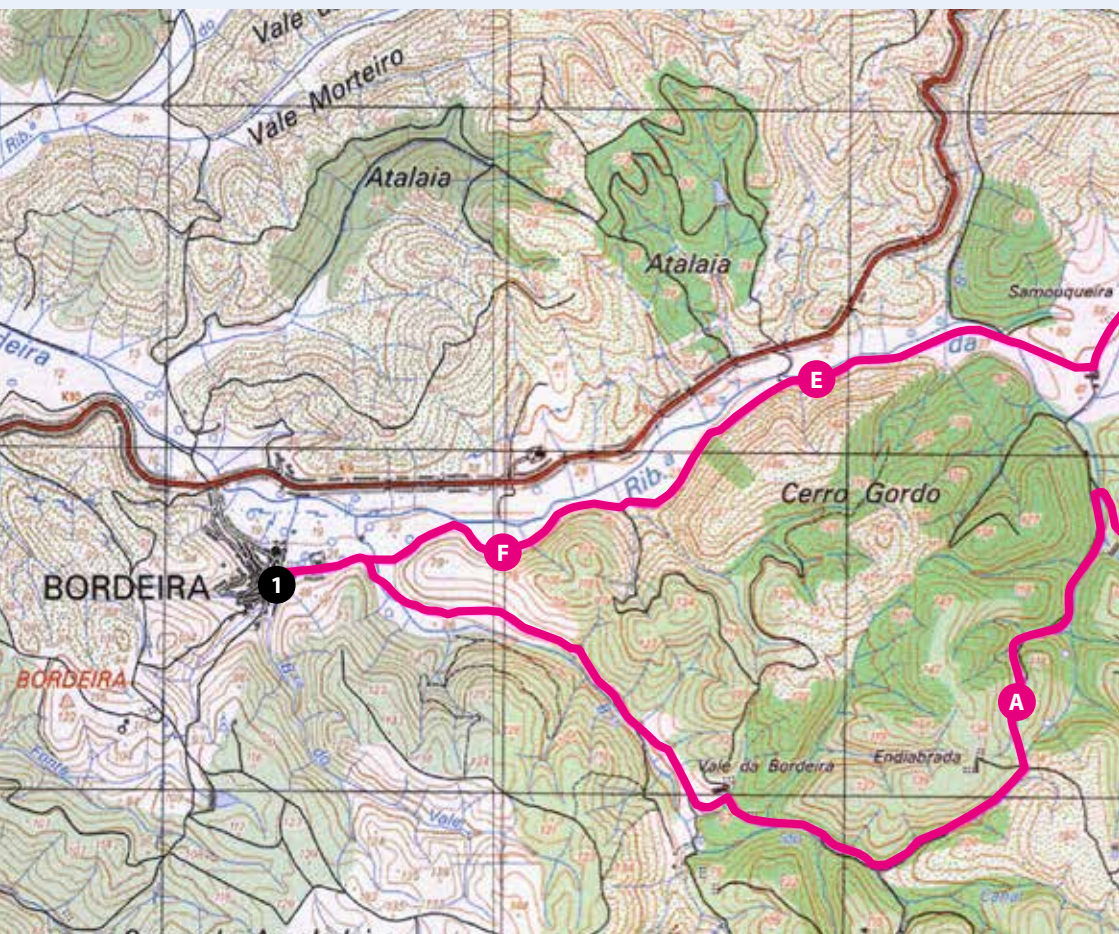
**C** - The ruins of a small rammed-earth house mark the beginning of a timberland

(maritime pine and eucalyptus.)

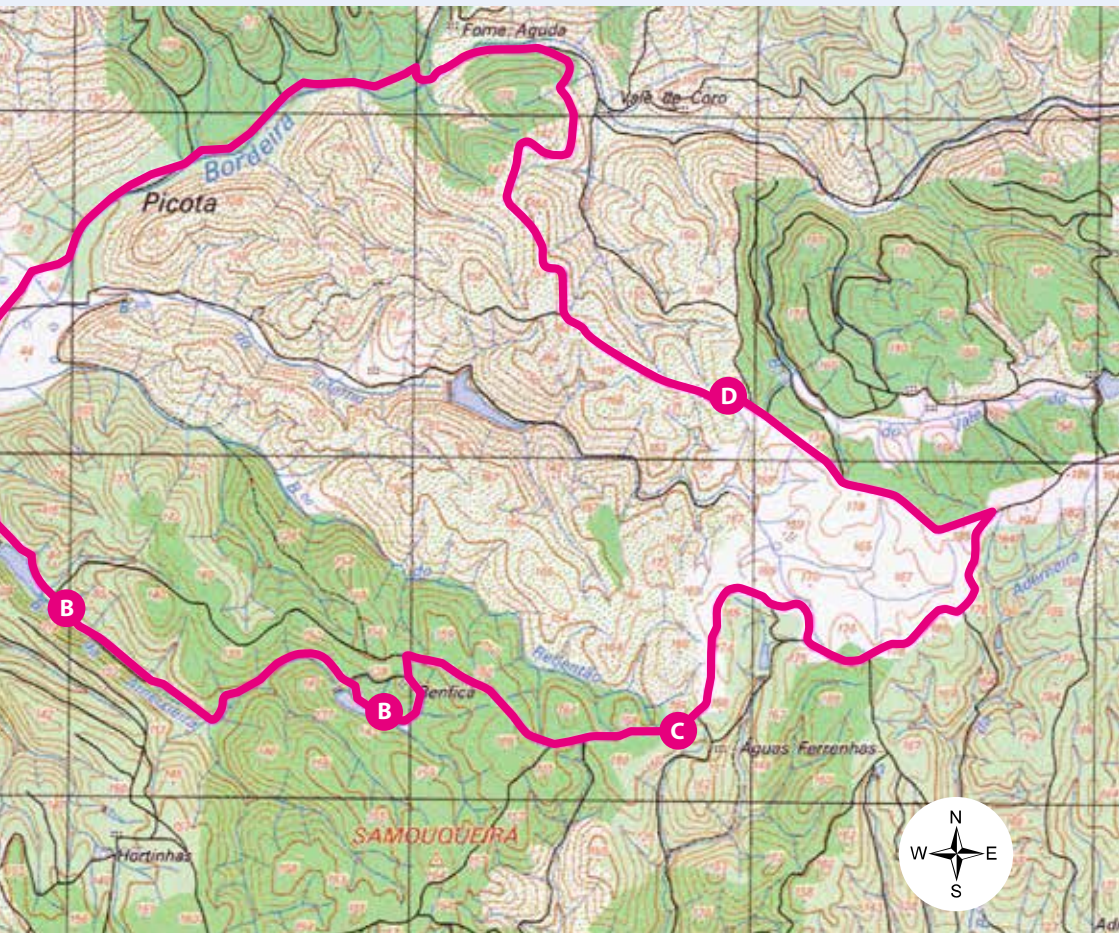
**D** – The path goes down towards the coastline, and you can see numerous hills framed by the sea. Eucalyptus forests may have taken over the landscape, but these woods are old and the native vegetation is starting to recover.

**E** – Arriving at Samouqueira, the path continues through the Bordeira's riverlands. The riparian gallery is dominated by tamarisk trees, willows and cork oaks, as well as reeds and brambles. The wetland pastures are teeming with reeds and common club-rushes.

**F** – Near Bordeira, the valley reveals a mosaic of vegetable gardens, pastures and orchards. The dark side of the valley has an old, lush oak forest, where you can easily identify cork oaks, strawberry trees, laurestines, briar roots and *Stauracanthus boivinii*, surrounded by ferns and lianas. These shady slopes offer plenty of shelter and food for the wildlife, which attracts the presence of carnivorous species: the common genet, the Egyptian mongoose, the badger, the weasel, the fox and, not many decades ago, the Iberian lynx.

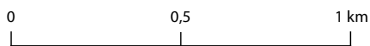


# Endiabrada and the Hidden Lakes



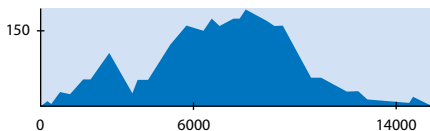
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 46.00" N 8° 51' 39.48" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Cultural and Environmental Circuit of Aljezur



Aljezur Castle

**Civil Parish:** Aljezur

**Municipality:** Aljezur

**Location:** Aljezur

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) to Bensafrim, then take the N120 to Aljezur.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6,4 Km (including the 3,7 km long Cultural and Environmental Circuit and the 2,7 km long Ribeira de Aljezur Trail).

**Average duration:** 1h30m to 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 200 metres D+

**Type of path:** asphalt and stone. Dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park and in the Rota Vicentina. There is a book and an audio-guide to help with the trail, published by the Aljezur's Municipal Council.

**Points of interest:** Aljezur river and riparian gallery, historical and cultural heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Aljezur Municipal Council



Farming fields in the area separating the two urban centres of Aljezur



Riparian gallery with alder trees

The trail covers the historical centre of Aljezur, revealing the town's early human occupation, and follows the first stretch of the Aljezur river.

**A** – Once navigable, the Aljezur river flows between white houses of Islamic origin and the mosaic of agricultural fields on the fertile wetlands. Alder trees line the verdant riparian gallery. This type of tree is exclusive to permanently wet soils, so it is very rare in the Algarve.

**B** – In the confluence of the Aljezur and Areiro rivers, you can find remnants of a dam, the *Escama-peixe*, which used to power the Serradinho's mill. People used to fish, wash their clothes and bathe here. There are insects, amphibians and birds. Once in a while, you can see an otter. The otter population of these Southeast rivers is known to go catch fish at sea.

**C** – Until the sixteenth century, *naus* and caravels (transporting goods between Europe and Africa) docked at Aljezur's river port. This was here the *Shipping House* was, where the goods were inspected and port taxes paid.

**D** – Aside from the *Desembarcadouro's* pier, in the D. Sancho valley (where the biggest ships anchored) there were also mooring points along the town's riverside. These narrow footpaths gave access to the mooring points.

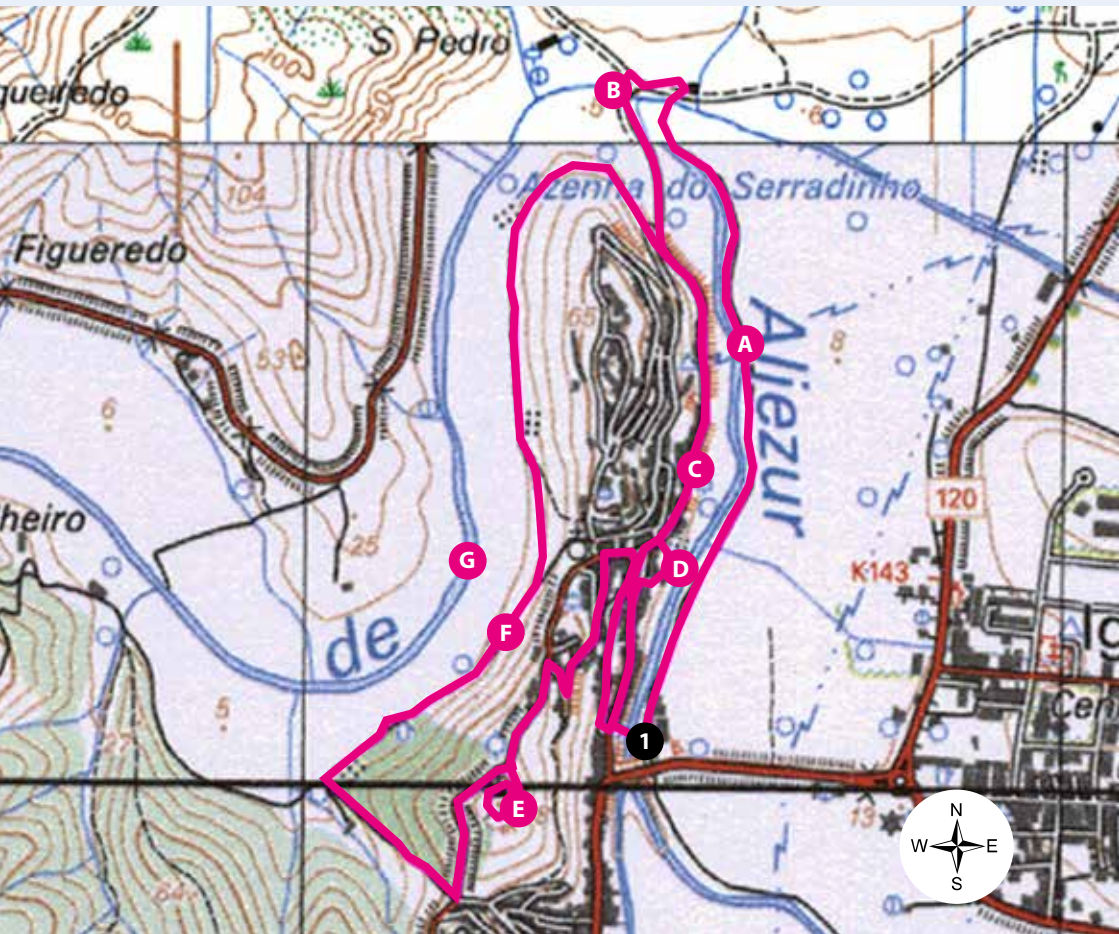
**E** – The Castle shows evidence of having been occupied since the Bronze Age, but it was during the Islamic and Christian periods that it acquired its current configuration. With a privileged view over the Aljezur valleys, it ensured the protection of this important river port.

**F** – Of the many legends told about this local stone fountain, the *Fountain of Lies*, most allude to underground corridors leading into the castle.

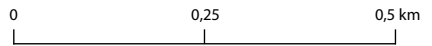
**G** – The D. Sancho valley is covered in salt marshes and wet pastures, accompanied by riverside gallery vegetation, filled with willows and ash trees, species adapted to water variations. The gallery forms a thick corridor which shelters mammals and provides a nesting place for birds.



# Cultural and Environmental Circuit of Aljezur

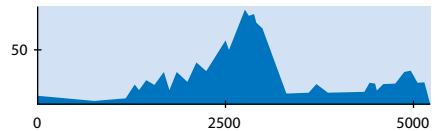


**1 Start of the trail**  
37° 19' 01.17" N 8° 48' 11.13" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Castelejo Nature Trail



Resting point with a view over the Castelejo ravine

**Civil Parish:** Vila do Bispo

**Municipality:** Vila do Bispo

**Location:** Castelejo leisure area

**How to get there:** from Vila do Bispo, take the M1265 to the Castelejo beach. About 2 km away, before the beach, you'll find the Castelejo's picnic park and leisure area.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 3,5 km

**Average duration:** 1 h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 110 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Perímetro Florestal de Vila do Bispo and Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park. The Parish Council publishes a field guide in print and CD-ROM, with info about the trail.

**Points of interest:** landscape, Castelejo's ravine, plants and birds common to coastal pine forests.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Vila do Bispo's Civil Parish



Stone pines (*Pinus pinea*) lining the landscape of the Castelejo trail



Starting point of the trail, next to the picnic park

The trail crosses a forest of stone pines which extends over the ravine of Castelejo's beach.

**A** – Castelejo's leisure area is located in an area of stone pines and matirime pines, as well as vegetation common in the area, mostly cistus (dominated by gum rockrose, grey-leaved cistus and sage-leaved rockrose) beds of gorse and broom, and bushes of heath, especially dwarf Spanish heath.

**B** – The forest is mainly composed of stone pines. It was planted to recreate the old coastal pine forests in the south coast of the country. Even though cistus is everywhere, there are also rare plants like the endemic *Thymus camphoratus*. The wildlife mainly consists of birds, like the great spotted

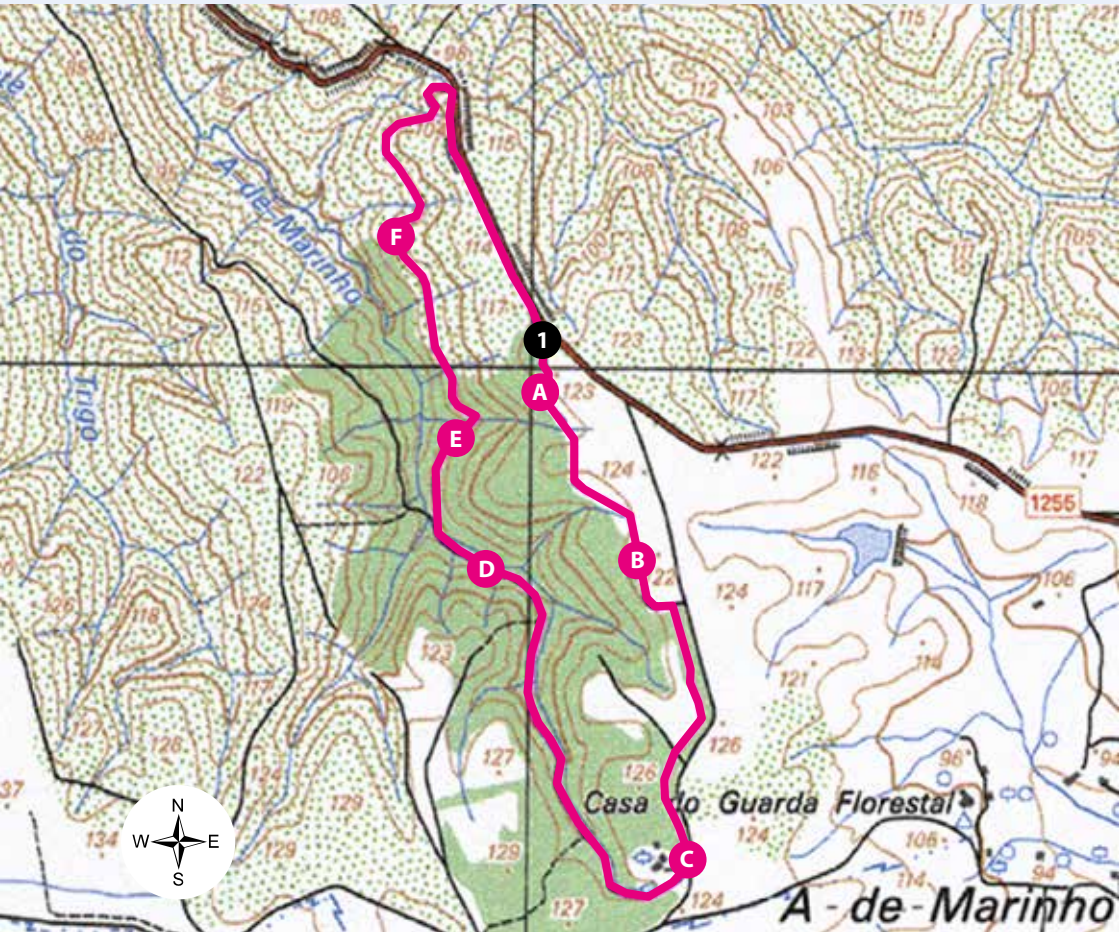
woodpecker, the jay or the great tit. In the more open areas, there's a regular presence of quails and common buzzards. If you carefully look for their signs or footprints, you might see a fox or a boar. You might also cross paths with wild rabbits.

**C** – Near the old forest ranger's house, on the shoreline, you can see the geodesic landmark of Torre da Aspa. This tower was likely part of a network of fortifications which remained active well into the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The highest point of the Algarve's coast is where the tower once stood, at 156m of altitude.

**D** – Climbing down the ravine, which was carved by water flowing down into the Castelejo beach, you can see the dense vegetation on the wet slopes, forming groves of strawberry trees and beds of narrow-leaved phillyrea, heathers and lianas. Tamarisks, reeds, cattails and poplars grow near a small lagoon. Frogs and dragonflies can be seen here in this place, which is also an important source of fresh water for mammals.

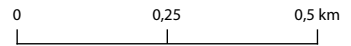
**E** – The way back up to the Vicentine plateau offers a panoramic view over the Castelejo's ravine and the numerous, round crowns of stone pines framed by the sea.

# Castelejo Nature Trail



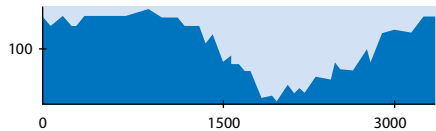
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 05' 28.80" N 8° 55' 56.10" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)







## Trails

- 38. The Delicate Rock
- 42. At the Whim of the Tides
- 46. Caminho dos Promontórios
- 50. Seven Hanging Valleys Trail
- 54. Praia Grande Interpretation Trail
- 58. São Lourenço Trail
- 62. Ludo Trails
- 66. Culatra Island
- 70. Marim Centre of Environmental Education Walking Trail
- 74. Barril Beach Trail



# 2. South Litoral

# The Delicate Rock



Quinta da Rocha promontory next to the ria

**Civil Parish:** Mexilhoeira Grande

**Municipality:** Portimão

**Location:** Quinta da Rocha

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the N125 to Portimão and Mexilhoeira Grande. There, turn left towards the train station.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6,1 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 80 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** salt marshes and salt ponds of the Ria de Alvor, aquatic birdlife, A Rocha Interpretation Centre, agricultural landscapes.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Portimão Municipal Council and Associação Almargem







Salt marshes and salt meadows

This trail runs across a peninsula in the heart of the estuarine-lagoon system of the Ria de Alvor. The place is generally called Quinta da Rocha, because the peninsula ends in a small limestone (*rocha calcária*) promontory. The trail is very interesting for observing aquatic birds, birds of prey and passerines, particularly during migrations and in the winter months.

**A** – More significant here, though seen everywhere along the trail, are the typical fields of the Algarve. They are old Arabian-inspired dryland orchards, where even today grow carob trees, almond trees, fig trees and olive trees; along with newer citrus orchards.

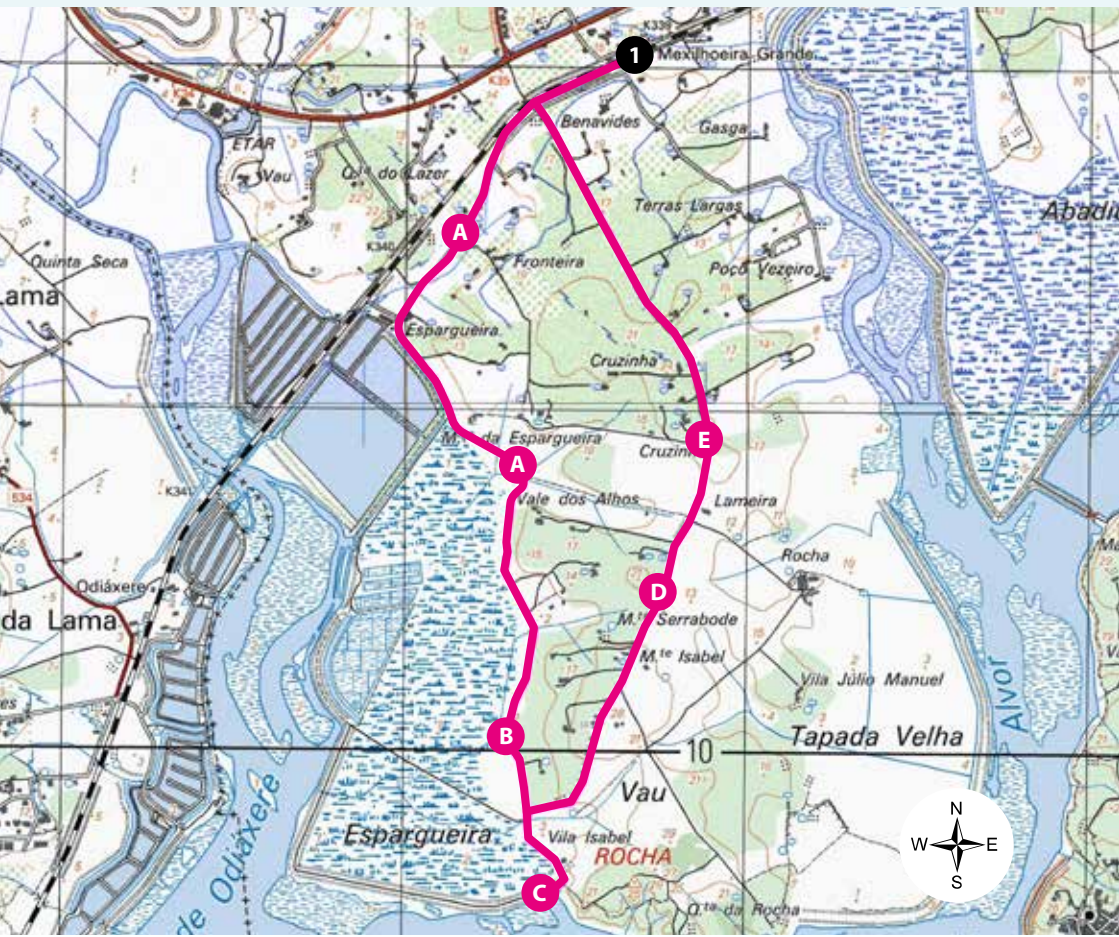
**B** – Here you'll come across an old hunting reserve, a *tapada*, and salt evaporation ponds being ecologically restored. The marsh vegetation that colonises these spaces is important because of its high biological productivity and the ability to purify the water. Many species of waders, such as the black-winged stilt, the common redshank, or different species of sandpiper or plover, feed or rest in these environments.

**C** – At the top of the promontory of Quinta da Rocha, formed by calcareous rocks of the Miocene period, you'll be able to spot fossils and shells of bivalves. This formation creates diversity in a landscape dominated by the shallow line of the lagoon with its banks of marsh and sand. The crest of the cliff is covered by stone pinewood and the Mediterranean scrubland typical of these places, including broom, white-leaved rockroses, kermes oak, mastic and the southernmost distribution of *Thymus camphoratus*.

**D** – A large agricultural property displays a mosaic of habitats which sustains diverse fauna: pastures, uncultivated fields, stone pinewood, and, at lower levels, banks of salt marsh and saline fields.

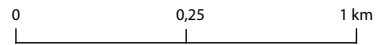
**E** – The Centre for the Study and Observation of Nature, founded in 1983 by the NGO A Rocha, has been responsible for several studies in the Ria de Alvor and for regular bird ringing and environmental education activities.

# The Delicate Rock



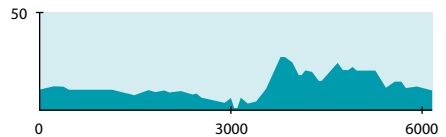
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 09' 14.75" N 8° 36' 34.69" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# At the Whim of the Tides



Most of the trail runs along this wooden walkway

**Civil Parish:** Alvor

**Municipality:** Portimão

**Location:** Praia de Alvor

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the N125 to Portimão and Alvor.

Then head to Alvor beach; just before the beach there are the Pools and the Fishing Harbour.

**Type:** walking and cyclable

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 4,8 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 30 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and wooden walkways.

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** estuarine-lagoon system of the Ria de Alvor, coastal avifauna, flora and fauna of the dunes, fishing and aquaculture communities.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Portimão Municipal Council and Associação Almargem

**Remarks:** the trail includes sections on sands.



Salt marsh vegetation and view over Alvor village's riverside



Common tern

The trail runs along a dune strand - the western sandbank of the Ria de Alvor - that protects the lagoon from the sea.

**A** – Ria de Alvor is the most important estuary in the Algarve; it is a space conducive to the growth of young fish and larvae of crustaceans and molluscs, serving as a breeding ground for many commercially valuable marine species. Activities traditionally linked to ria, such as hatching bivalves, attest to the productivity of the lagoon and its socioeconomic interest. The fishing community keeps artisanal fishing alive, using such gear as encircling net and pots for octopuses.

**B** – Several salty habitats exist here. In salt marshes grow salt-tolerant plants, which shelter living beings and sustain complex trophic relationships. In addition to protecting the coast, marshes retain nutrients and degrade pollutants, and are therefore considered the earth's kidneys.

**C** - Life in the estuary runs with the tidal cycle. When the tide falls, and while shellfish

gatherers pick up cockles and grooved carpet shells, the water birds (especially herons and waders, such as sandpipers or plovers) feast on the organisms found in the tidal flats.

**D** – Two iconic birds of these dunes are the little tern and the Kentish plover. These habitual residents of the area nest in the sand dunes. When they want to nest, these birds dig a small hole in the sand and gather small pieces of shells.

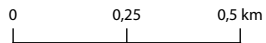
**E** – The dune systems are very dynamic habitats in which the sand and the plants are in permanent equilibrium. The vegetation exhibits a typical sequence along the dune: sand couch-grass and the European searocket are pioneering plants that grow in the tideline, while the showy sea daffodil and European beachgrass colonise the dune crest, fixing and stabilizing the sands.

# At the Whim of the Tides

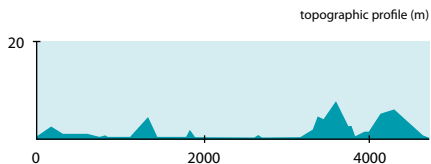


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 07' 35.26" N 8° 35' 45.26" W



 Trail



# Caminho dos Promontórios



Torre da Lapa

**Civil Parish:** Ferragudo, Estômbar e Parchal, Lagoa e Carvoeiro

**Municipality:** Lagoa

**Location:** coastal strip between the Praia do Molhe and Carvoeiro.

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) as far as Lagoa, then head in the direction of Ferragudo, and from there to Praia do Molhe.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** no

**Distance:** 6 km (12 km there and back)

**Average duration:** 3h (6h there and back)

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 365 metres D+ (starting at Praia do Molhe) and 340 metres D+ (starting in Ferragudo).

**Type of path:** somewhat rocky dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very rainy/windy days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes, including information panels.

**Specific features:** the Leixão da Gaivota is classified as Special Protection Zone (SPA) under the Natura 2000 Birds Directive. It is the smallest SPZ in Portugal, with an area of about 0.16ha.

**Points of interest:** karst landscape, flora and fauna of coastal cliffs, historical and cultural heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Lagoa Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the cliffs along the coastal shoreline are unstable, so keep a safe distance from the edge (ridge).





Eroded cliff near Carvoeiro

The trail follows the outline of the coast between the Praia do Molhe, near the mouth of the river Arade, and the beach of Paraíso. To the east of Ponta do Altar, a series of promontories alternate with inlets which shelter small stretches of sand.

**A** – The Ponta do Altar advances 260m inland, bounding the mouth of the Arade to the east. These cliffs are Miocene limestone, easily carved by the sweet and salty waters, creating a so-called *karst landscape*. In Ponta do Altar there are coves and inlets, geoforms resulting from the subterranean circulation of fresh water.

**B** – Leixão da Gaivota is one of the many prominent cliffs along this stretch of coast. Despite its modest size, it is an important breeding ground for herons, and it also shelters colonies of little egret and cattle egret.

**C** – Limestone cliffs, heavily fissured and inaccessible to terrestrial predators, offer refuges for the rock dove, yellow-legged gull, common kestrel or the peregrine falcon.

**D** – The Torre da Lapa was built in the 17th century, in stone and mortar. It was used to watch the sea, especially the mouth of the Arade. In case of danger, torch bearers would make smoke during the day and light fires at night, alerting the populations and other fortifications in the region.

**E** – Here there are vestiges of the reservoir of Presa da Moura, of Roman origin. This dam was part of a manufacturing unit for salting and preserving fish, now disappeared as a result of the receding coastline.

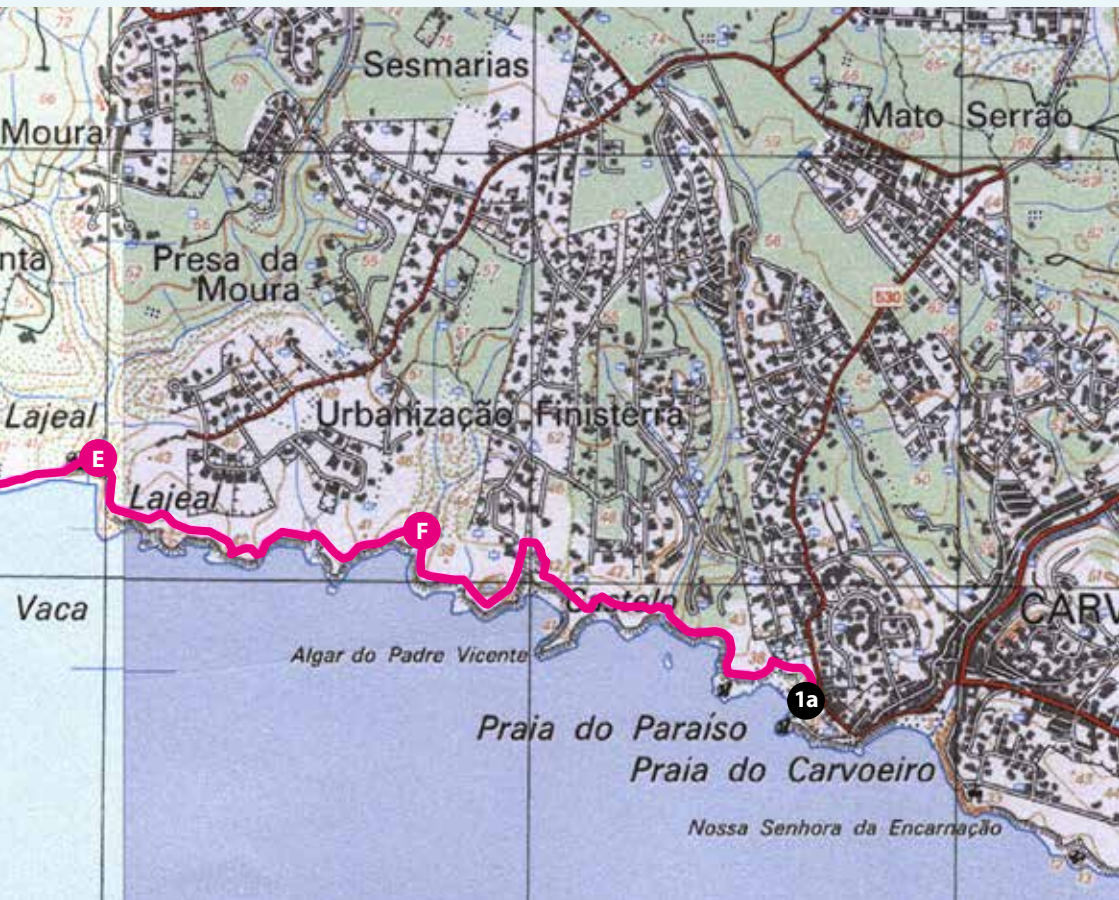
**F** – The scrublands that colonise these limestone beds are dominated by juniper bushes and kermes oak, accompanied by plants typical of the Barrocal, like the Mediterranean dwarf palm and mastic trees. Along the edge of the cliffs, there are plants like the Mediterranean saltbush, which have adapted to the maritime influence.



Leixão da Gaivota



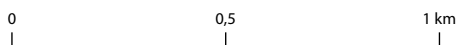
# Caminho dos Promontórios



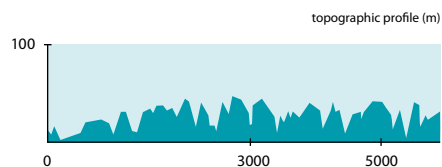
## Start of the trail

1 – 37° 06' 34.69 N 8° 31' 09.60" W

1a – 37° 05' 49.04" N 8° 28' 29.61" W



 Trail



# Seven Hanging Valleys



Karst landscape of Marinha beach

**Civil Parish:** Lagoa e Carvoeiro

**Municipality:** Lagoa

**Location:** coastal strip between Praia da Marinha and Praia de Vale Centeanes.

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) motorway as far as Lagoa, then head toward the beaches to Praia da Marinha.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** no

**Distance:** 6 km (12 km there and back)

**Average duration:** 3h (6h there and back)

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 360 metres D+ (starting at Praia da Marinha), 370 metres D+ (starting at Praia de Vale Centeanes).

**Type of path:** somewhat rocky dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very rainy/windy days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes, including information panels

**Points of interest:** karst landscape, including arches, coves, islets and hanging valleys; flora and fauna of the coastal cliffs; cultural heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Lagoa Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the cliffs along the coastal shoreline are unstable, so keep a safe distance from the edge (ridge).

This trail climbs up and down ravines that almost always open up above sea level - the *hanging valleys*. In the distant past, each hanging valley was associated with the mouth of a stream, and was created by a rapid retreat of the coastline which was not accompanied by the water's edge.

**A** – The action of fresh and salty waters on the coast creates a jagged coastline, called a *karst landscape*, with a remarkable diversity of geofoms that can be seen in Praia da Marinha: arches, coves and islets.

**B** – Praia de Benagil is associated with the mouth of a pluvial stream that carved a narrow gully in the cliff. This beach has sheltered a fishing community dedicated to traditional crafts; nowadays, vessels are mainly busy with visits to the marine caves.

**C** – At Praia do Carvalho, you can reach the beach through a tunnel excavated in the soft Miocene limestones, where you can see a profusion of sea shells aggregated in the rocky groundmass. Among the Mediterranean coastal scrubland there is the Mediterranean dwarf palm, the only European palm tree, and you can see the Sardinian warbler, a small bird typical of the region.



Yellow-legged gull



Path on top of the cliff, heading towards the Alfanzina Lighthouse

**D** – After the deep green of Mediterranean vegetation comes a lunar landscape of naked, bare rock. Old legends are told about this great boulder, the Leixão do Ladrão, such as that of the Moorish princess who mourns the death of her lover, her tears create the paths and tracery so typical of limestone.

**E** – Near the Alfanzina Lighthouse grows a grove of Aleppo pine, one of the few trees that managed to settle in this rocky and arid terrain. Here, the pine forests function as ecological islands for tits, rock-thrushes or little owls. Dense vegetation favours mammals such as the rabbit, the Egyptian mongoose, or the fox.



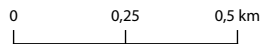
# Seven Hanging Valleys



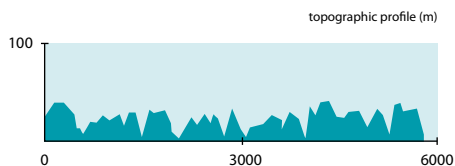
## Start of the trail

1 – 37° 05' 24.59" N 8° 24' 46.74" W

1a – 37° 05' 29.31" N 8° 27' 14.33" W



 Trail



# Praia Grande Interpretation Trail



Panoramic view over the Lagoa dos Salgados, with the banks densely covered in aquatic vegetation

**Civil Parish:** Pera

**Municipality:** Silves

**Location:** Pera / Praia Grande

**How to get there:** on the N125, go as far as Algoz. Turn to Pera and head towards Praia Grande, to the parking lot next to Lagoa dos Salgados.

**Type:** walking and partly cycling

**Circular trail:** no

**Distance:** 5,2 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 60 metres D+

**Type of path:** sand and dirt paths and wooden walkways

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no. There are some interpretation panels about the trail.

**Specific features:** Lagoa dos Salgados is classified as an IBA - *Important Bird Area*, by *BirdLife International*. There is an optional linear track that runs along the western shore of Lagoa dos Salgados.

**Points of interest:** wetlands (marsh and coastal lagoon), birdlife, dune system, fossil cliff and fossil dune.

**Owners:** private and public paths

**Responsible Party:** Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente / ARH do Algarve

**Remarks:** some sections of the trail are used for horse-riding.





At the entrance to the beach you can easily see sandstones, a sedimentary rock formed from fossilised dunes



Northern shoveler, one of the many aquatic birds typical to the Lagoa dos Salgados

This trail, which will let you discover the Lagoa dos Salgados, one of the most iconic wetlands in the Algarve for birdwatching, runs through a harmonious mosaic of habitats with a high ecological value.

**A** – At the Lagoa de Salgados, the dense beds of reeds and rushes hide a diverse birdlife.

This coastal lagoon, fed by the Espiche river, is known for harbouring interesting species such as the ferruginous duck, the purple swamphen, the Eurasian spoonbill, the black-winged stilt or the purple heron. Large flocks of flamingos, that use the lagoon for resting and feeding, are also a common sight.

**B** – The mouth of the Espiche River, with its intermittent connection with the sea, establishes the boundary between the municipalities of Albufeira and Silves and the Praia Grande and Praia dos Salgados. Follow along the long beach to the wooden walkway that crosses the dune system of Praia Grande.

**C** – Sandstones rises from these sands, a very ductile rock that serves as a witness to the existence of a fossil dune around 4000 years old. In the maritime slope of the

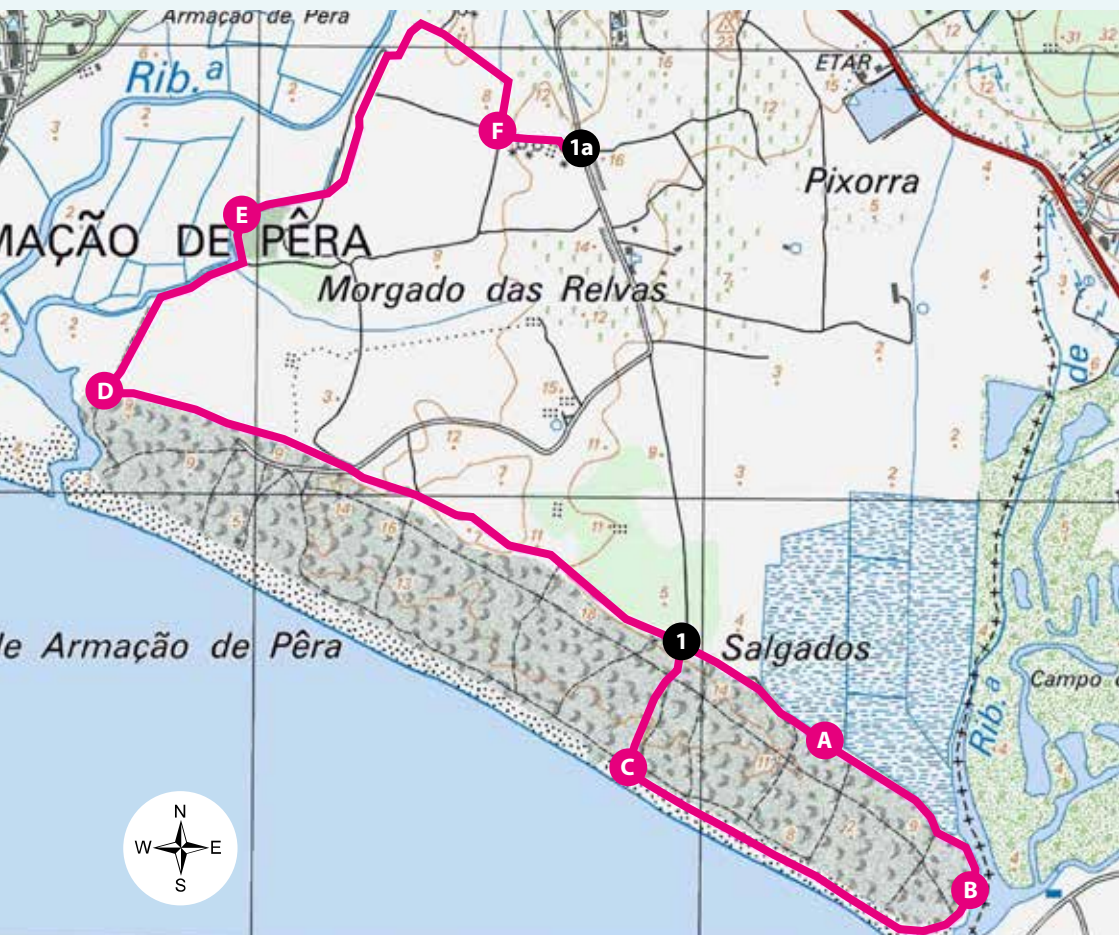
dune you can observe plants such as the colourful sea daffodil and the spiny thrift. The dune crest is held in place by European beachgrass, and, further in, the undulating sandy expanse is dominated by the aromatic *Helichrysum stoechas*.

**D** – In the salt marsh of Pera, near the mouth of the Alcantarilha river, there are the typical communities of saline environments: rushes, halophytic scrub and saline Mediterranean meadows. You can frequently spot birds like the herring gull and the common black-headed gull, and waders prodding the mud flats with their long beaks.

**E** – A patch of stone pines coats a fossil cliff. This rocky outcrop dates back to the Miocene and forms a shell-midden, with abundant marine fossils, e.g. oysters, sea urchins, and shark teeth.

**F** – In the Arab-inspired dryland orchards, now abandoned and taken over by beds of gorse, there are still some almond, carob and fig trees. Here you can see ancient mills and barns as a testament to the region's agricultural past.

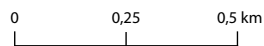
# Praia Grande Interpretation Trail



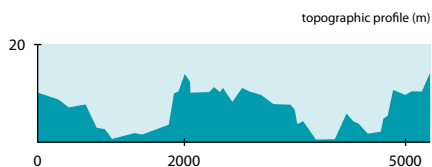
## Start of the trail

1 – 37° 06' 19.58" N 8° 20' 20.90" W

1a – 37° 05' 44.04" N 8° 20' 11.70" W



 Trail



# São Lourenço Trail



Access bridge to the Ancão beach, at the beginning of the trail

**Civil Parish:** Almancil

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Quinta do Lago

**How to get there:** head towards Almancil on the N125, then turn to Quinta do Lago and follow the signs to the parking lot of Quinta do Lago beach.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** no, linear

**Distance:** 3,3 km (there and back)

**Average duration:** 1h30m

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 55 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no signage, but there are some information billboards and directional arrows.

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** wet areas - salt marshes and freshwater lakes, marine birdlife. This is one of the most interesting trails to get to know the fauna and flora of Ria Formosa.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Infraquinta - Empresa De Infraestruturas Da Quinta Do Lago, E.M.

**Remarks:** the trail may sometimes be flooded, since the water levels of the salt marsh are affected by the tides. Be wary of stray balls when walking near the golf course.



Sultana bird, or western swamphen, an aquatic bird, symbol of the Ria Formosa Natural Park



Freshwater lagoon, part of the São Lourenço golf

The trail encompasses the typical habitats of Ria Formosa, affording the possibility of spotting marine species of birds.

**A** – Along the path between the salt marsh and the golf course, on the silt banks at low tide, you can watch the *Uca tangeri* fiddler crab busying around, as well as many species of waders (e.g. the pied avocet and the black-winged stilt) and, occasionally, fishermen catching bivalve molluscs. By the water, with an attentive eye, you can see one of the many of the river's *olheiros* (freshwater upwelling) bubbling. Typical succulents can be seen here, adapted to the soaked saline soil. In drier land, the *Limoniastrum monopetalum*, a bush endemic to the south coast, displays its exuberant lilac flowering.

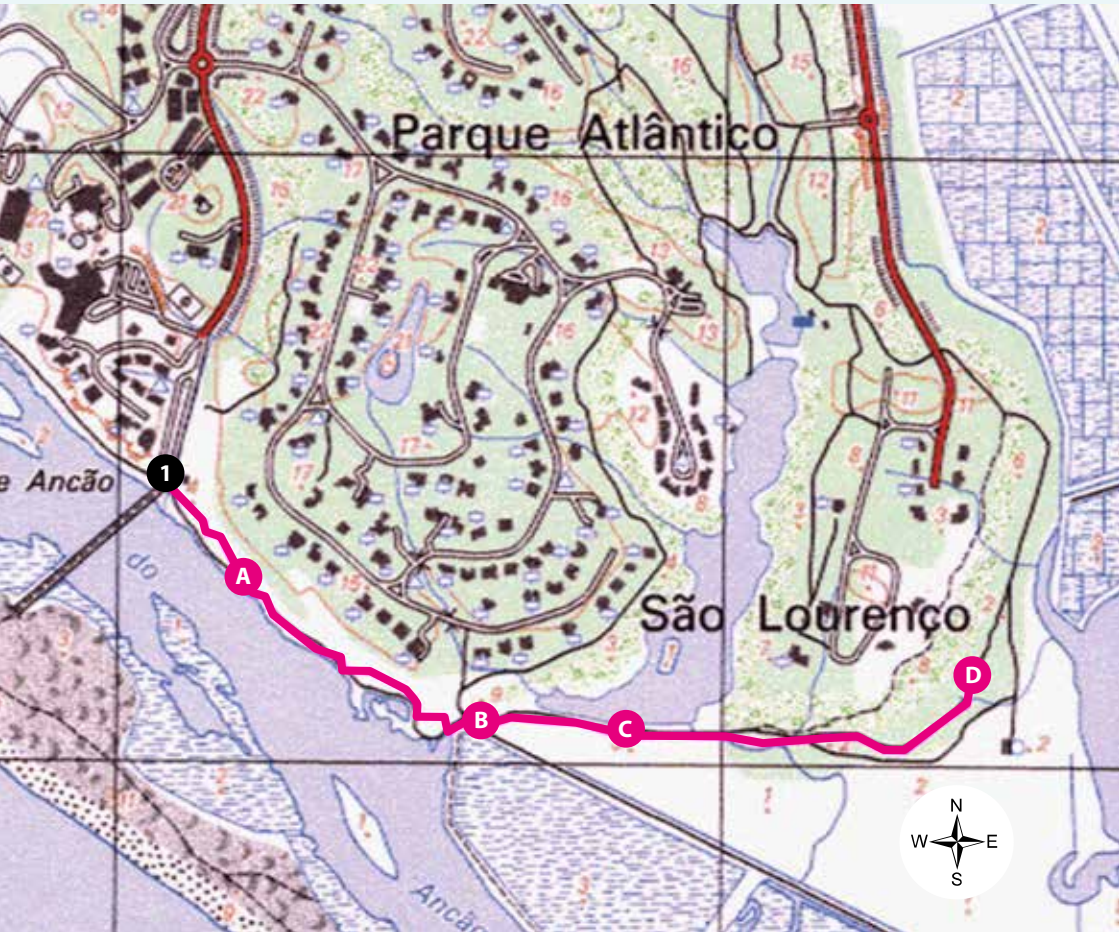
**B** – Underneath the stone pine groves there are plants like the mastic tree, the cistus, the sage-leaved rock-rose and aromatics like the thyme, the Spanish lavender and the Mediterranean dwarf palm, the only palm tree native to Europe. Birds like the azure-winged magpie or the Eurasian hoopoe are common and, with some luck, you may

even be able to spot a chameleon, a reptile adapted to the Algarve's coastal pine woods.

**C** – This freshwater lake, with its marshy vegetation (mainly cattails and reeds), is one of the most interesting places in Algarve for birdwatching. You can find the Western swamphen (symbol of the PNRF) and other rails, as well as ducks, herons, grebes, seagulls and common terns, among others. The observatory for birdwatching offers a good view over the lake. During the summer you might also see freshwater turtles native to Portugal: the Mediterranean pond turtle and the European pond turtle.

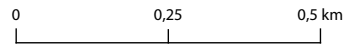
**D** – Here, with a backdrop of the large carob trees so common in the Mediterranean, you can see the ruins of fish salting tanks (*cetárias*), evidence of the Roman presence in the region. These tanks were used to make *garum*, a sauce made from the maceration of fish and crustaceans, much appreciated by the Romans.

# São Lourenço Trail

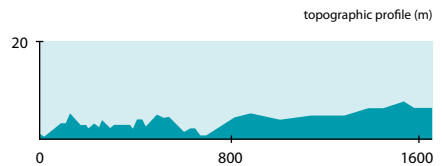


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 01' 41.76" N 8° 01' 15.72" W



 Trail



# Ludo Trails



View over one of the Ludo's salt marshes

**Civil Parish:** Montenegro (Faro) and Almancil (Loulé)

**Municipality:** Faro and Loulé

**Location:** Ludo

**How to get there:** head towards Aeroporto de Faro on the N125 and then turn towards Praia de Faro. Turn right to Estrada da Praia (to begin the hike at Vale das Almas) or go straight ahead to the parking lot leading to the beach (to begin the hike near the beach parking lot).

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** no, linear

**Distance:** 8,4 km

**Average duration:** 2h to 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 40 metres D+ (start near Vale das Almas), 70 metres D+ (start near the airport).

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no signage, but there are some information boards and directional arrows.

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** aquatic birds, pine forest and lagoon habitats (silt banks, salt marshes and dunes), saltpan complex.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Sociedade Polis Litoral Ria Formosa, S.A.





The *cistanche*, one of the most eye-catching salt marsh species



Salt deposit extracted from the industrial salt ponds, which you can see along the route

This trail follows the border between the land environment and the lagoon system of Ria Formosa and lets you visit different habitats: forest areas, salt marshes and salt pans.

**A** – In Vale das Almas, the trail advances through a lush patch of stone pine, where you can also find maritime pine and some eucalyptus. You can also easily spot the great tit, the Eurasian hoopoe and the azure-winged magpie. This is also the habitat of two rare plants exclusive to the Algarve: the *Thymus lotocephalus* and the *Tuberaria major*.

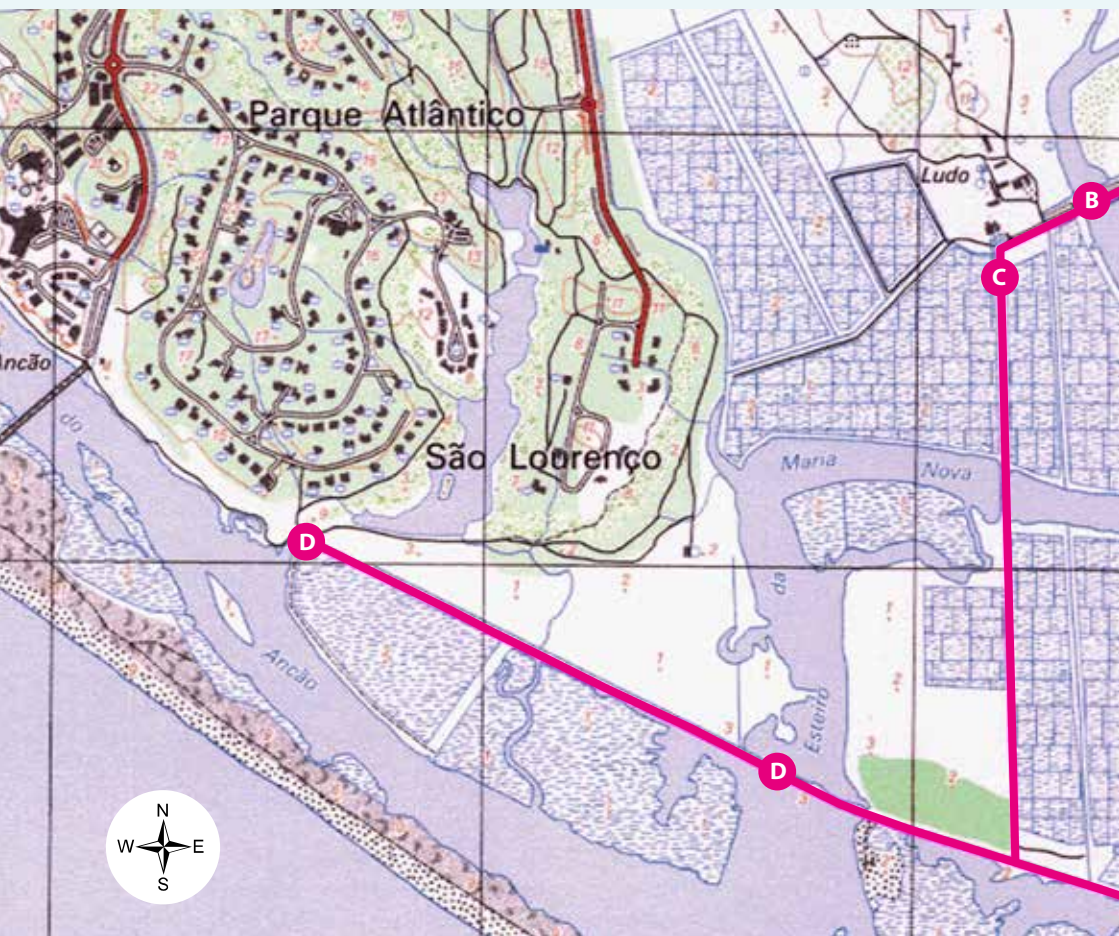
**B** – The final stretch of the São Lourenço river, north of the dirt path, is the only source of freshwater around. A big floodgate makes sure salt water and freshwater don't mix. There is a dense, marshy vegetation here, and aquatic birds like ducks, pochards, grebes and coots are common. During the winter there are great gatherings of Eurasian wigeons and northern shovelers.

**C** – The view stretches over a large system of creeks and salt pans, from where what was once called *white gold* is extracted. Next

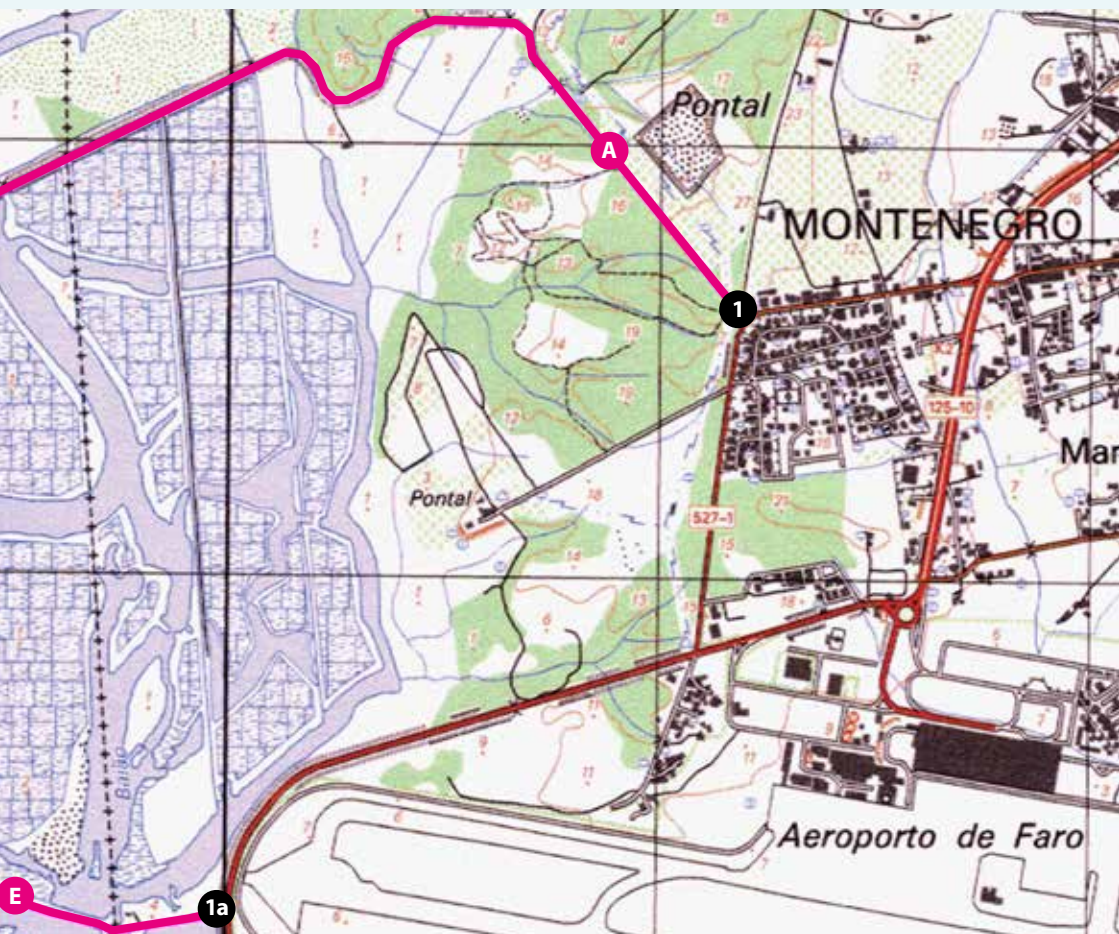
to the path, a large, clear mound of salt shines under the sun; salt production is an industrial activity here. Nevertheless, birds like the flamingo appreciate these hyper-saline reservoirs of shallow water, teeming with nutritious invertebrate critters.

**D** – To reach the bird observatory, you have to cross the lagoon area and its salt marshes. On the silt banks, during low-tide, it is possible to see *Uca tangeri* crabs, shorebirds (equipped with special beaks to pick through the silt) and fisherman catching cockles and grooved carpet shells.

**E** – Along the path separating Ludo from the lagoon, the view will open to the Ancão peninsula and its dunes. The dunes progressively give away to a small fishing settlement and summer houses. The walls lining the path are covered with a plant exclusive to the south, the *Limoniastrum monopetalum*, a shrub of exuberant lilac foliage, adapted to the surrounding salinity.



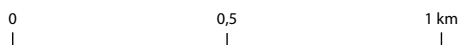
# Ludo Trails



## Start of the trail

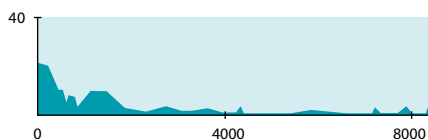
1 – 37° 01' 45.86" N 7° 58' 29.71" W

1a – 37° 01' 00.59" N 7° 59' 17.97" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Culatra Isle



Panoramic view over the sweeping dunes

**Civil Parish:** Sé

**Municipality:** Faro

**Location:** Ilha da Culatra

**How to get there:** take a ship from the Olhão pier; there are year-round trips to Culatra.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** no, linear

**Distance:** 5,6 km (there and back)

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 20 metres D+

**Type of path:** wooden walkways and sand paths.

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** aquatic birds, lagoon habitats (silt banks, salt marshes and dunes), beach.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Faro Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail follows a 1,5 km stretch of beach.



Culatra Beach during low tide



Fishing boat and Church of Culatra Isle, at the beginning of the trail

To reach Culatra you cross the lagoon of Ria Formosa. Enjoy the view over the maritime landscape and, during low tide, watch the salt marshes and the numerous birds looking for food in the silt.

**A** – You disembark on Culatra, a fishing settlement dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It supported the seasonal fishing of tuna. Nowadays, to the east of the quay, you'll find the port's fishing boats and equipment, and to the west you'll find fisheries of grooved carpet shells and oysters.

**B** – Crossing the village, a walkway takes you to the vast dune system. The occasional inlet cuts across the sands, flooding with the high tide. Salt marsh plants grow in these parts, e.g. the alkali seepweed and the *Cistanche phelypaea*, a lush parasite plant.

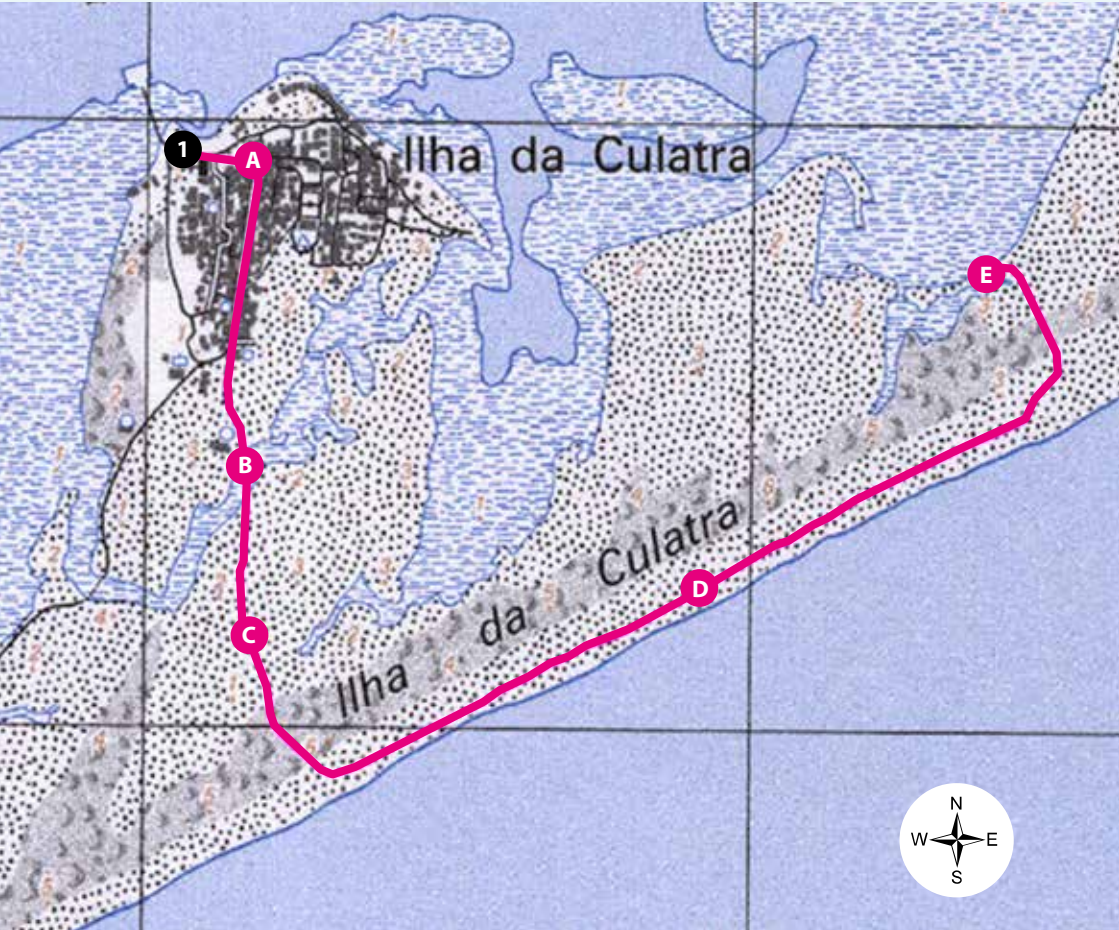
**C** – The environmental conditions of the dunes are harsh. There's solar insolation, aridity, saline winds, lack of nutrients and shifting sands. Only very specialised species can colonise this habitat. Along the dunes you can find plants like the sea

aster, and aromatics like the curry plant and the *Thymus carnosus* (a species of thyme exclusive to the south coast). The more easily observable wildlife are insects (butterflies and beetles) and reptiles (geckos and the ocellated lizard).

**D** – Walking on the sand, you can see the front edge of the dunes, covered in beachgrass and pioneer species of plants which grow on the tide line, like the sea holly, the European searocket and the common saltwort. Other species making the dunes their home are: seagulls, terns (e.g. the little tern) and micromammals like the wood mouse and the shrew.

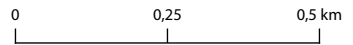
**E** – The walkway on the dunes gives access to a viewpoint over one of Culatra's coves. The coves are very productive places (natural banks of bivalves), shallow and favourable to birdwatching species like the spotted redshank, the common curlew, the dunlin, the great egret and the grey heron.

# Culatra Isle

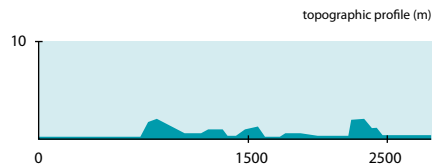


## 1 Start of the trail

36° 59' 41.94" N 7° 50' 29.87" W



 Trail



# Marim Centre of Environmental Education Walking Trail



Trail through the pine forest that covers a large part of Quinta de Marim

**Civil Parish:** Quelfes

**Municipality:** Olhão

**Location:** Quinta de Marim

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the N125 towards Olhão / Tavira and turn when you see the arrow to Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, about 1 km after passing Olhão.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 3,5 km

**Average duration:** 2h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 50 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and wooden walkways

**When to visit:** all year round. Quinta de Marim working hours: weekdays from 8am to 8pm; weekends from 10am to 8pm.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes, with distinctive yellow signs.

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.; there is equipment and infrastructure to support environmental education activities.

**Points of interest:** pine forest, salt marshes and freshwater lakes, tide mill, birdwatching.

**Owners:** Instituto de Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF)

**Responsible Party:** IICNF / Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF)

**Remarks:** the main office of the PNRF, where the CEAM (Centre of Environmental Education of Marim) is located, opens only on weekdays.





Black-winged stilt, one of the waders which nest on the Ria Formosa



Tide mill

Quinta de Marim is an estate of about 60 hectares, which is home to the main office of the PNRF and the CEAM. The estate shares many of the ria's most important natural values, and it is a privileged place for spotting passerines and aquatic birds.

**A** – The path leads you to the main office of the PNRF; here you can see exhibitions, obtain information and buy reading material.

**B** – There's a walkway running on the transition between land and lagoon areas. Here, between the marshes and the pine forest, there is a small dune inhabited by a large population of the aromatic curry plant. Beyond the dunes, during low tide, you can see bivalve breeding grounds.

**C** – Marim's tide mill only stopped working in 1970, the last mill in Ria to do so. The hydraulic mechanism, which uses tidal force to power its millstones and grind cereal, is now open to visitors. If you want a magnificent view on the surrounding landscape, climb onto the roof terrace.

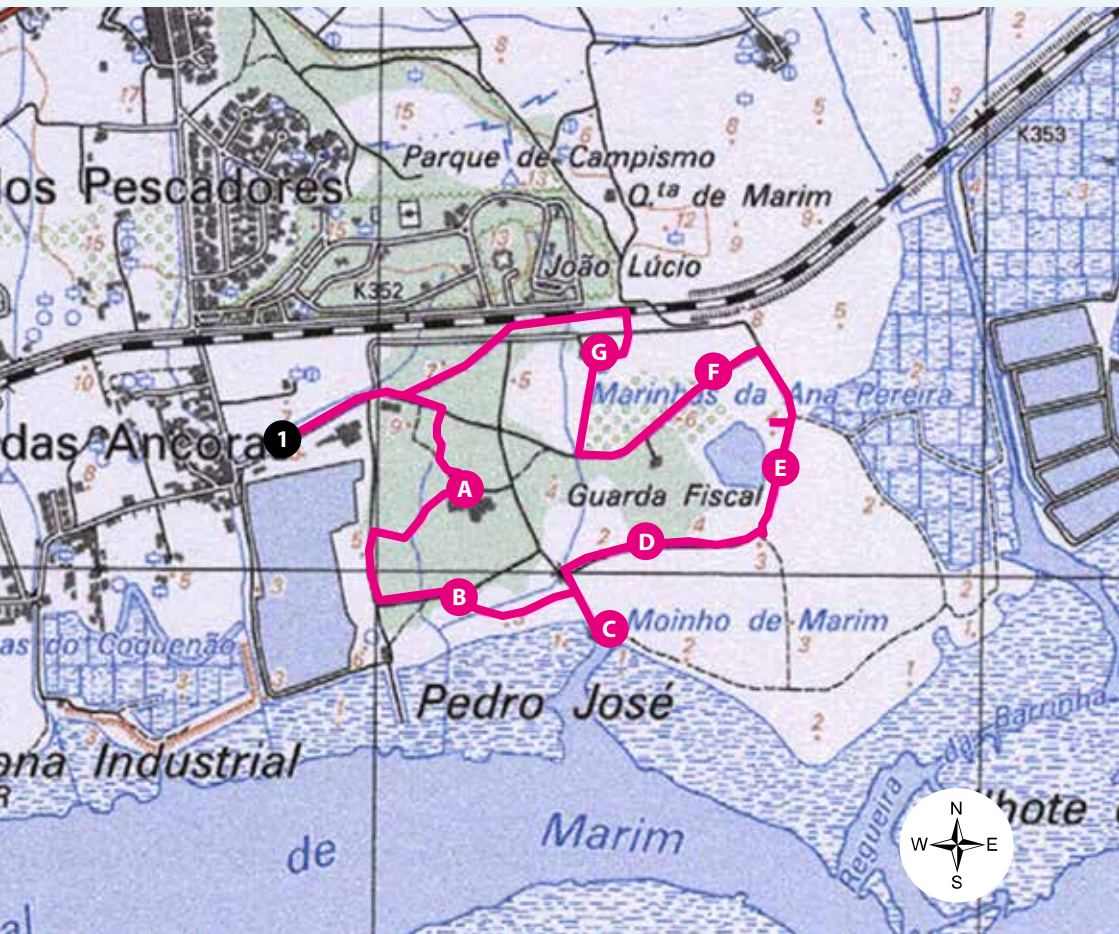
**D** – In the pine forest grows a thick scrubland of strawberry trees, mastic trees, tojo-gatum (*S. boivini*), sage-leaved rock-roses and Mediterranean dwarf palm.

**E** – The observatories are privileged places from which to spot local bird species, from passerines common in pine forests and orchards to species inhabiting the lagoon and salt pans. One of the observatories is near a salt pan, and from there you can see waders looking for food in the silt. From the other observatory you can see a large freshwater lake sheltering a diverse community of aquatic birds. It is the nesting place of the Eurasian coot, the kingfisher and the least grebe.

**F** – This is where the RIAS - Centre of Animal Retrieval and Research is located. It has a small reception hall for visitors.

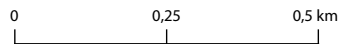
**G** – Near the traditional houses and the rehabilitated noria, you can see the House-Museum of the poet João Lúcio, which hosts the Ecoteca of Olhão.

# Marim Centre of Environmental Education Walking Trail

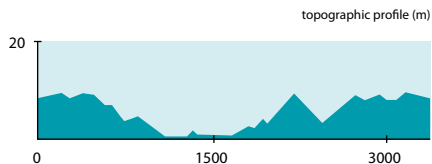


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 01' 58.75" N 7° 49' 18.07" W



 Trail



# Barril Beach Trail



Old fishing camp and anchor cemetery

**Civil Parish:** Santa Luzia

**Municipality:** Tavira

**Location:** Pedras d'El Rei

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the A22 (Via do Infante) or the N125 towards Tavira; about 2 km east of Luz de Tavira, head to the village of Pedras d'El Rei. You can park in the parking lot near the beach and along the road connecting the village to Santa Luzia.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** no, linear

**Distance:** 3 km (there and back)

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 20 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt and cement paths, wooden walkways and sandy shore.

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no, but there are information billboards.

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** salt march and dunes flora and fauna, aquatic birds, landscapes of Ria Formosa.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Tavira Municipal Council



Pedestrian bridge connecting Pedras d'El Rei and the island of Tavira



Fiddler crab (*Uca tangeri*), visible in the mud during low tide

This hike leads you to Barril beach, to where you can also go by tram. The trail crosses the Tavira channel, through the Barril's drawbridge, and a considerable area of salt marsh and dunes.

**A** – The first 600 metres of the trail cross Ria Formosa's typical salt marshes, with its complex network of snaking watercourses, silt banks and the salt marsh's peculiar vegetation. The path is lined by a plant exclusive to the south, the *Limoniastrum monopetalum*, a shrub of exuberant lilac foliage. During your journey, you can easily see (especially during the low tide) iconic species like the *Uca tangeri* crab and aquatic birds such as herons, sanderlings, terns, ringed plovers, red knots, black-winged stilts and pied avocets.

**B** – The succulent plants common in saline areas gradually give way to beds of reeds and bulrushes, indicative of an upwelling of fresh or brackish waters. The path then continues over a vast stretch of dune with low vegetation, typical of more stable sands. The curry plant, a golden scrub which, as

the name indicates, smells intensely of curry, takes over the landscape and the fragrances in the air.

**C** – Here you can find various support facilities for use at the beach. They are at an old fishing camp, which used to support the fishermen during the summer months (mainly for tuna fishing). In its heyday this fishing camp, created in 1841, would have been a home to 80 fishermen and their families. On the beach you can see a cemetery of anchors that were used for pound nets.

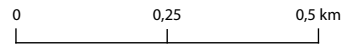
**D** – On the sea-facing side of the dunes grow small plants well-adapted to the shifting sands, like the seashore false bindweed, the sea holly and the European searocket. Behind them there's the jaunty sea daffodil and the seagrass, whose long roots help shape the dunes. The yellow-legged gull, the Mediterranean gull and the common tern are usual visitors to the beach.

# Barril Beach Trail

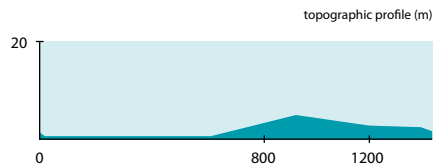


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 05' 35.02" N 7° 40' 30.79" W



 Trail









## Trails

- 80.** Municipal Park of Sítio das Fontes Trail
- 84.** Paderne Castle Trail
- 88.** Rocha da Pena Trail
- 92.** The Tôr Trail
- 96.** Fonte da Benémola Trail
- 100.** Caminhos e Encruzilhadas de ir à Fonte



# 3. Barrocal

# Municipal Park of Sítio das Fontes Trail



Dam, tide mill and the old miller's house

**Civil Parish:** Estômbar

**Municipality:** Lagoa

**Location:** Sítio das Fontes

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) until the exit to Silves, then head towards Estômbar. In Estômbar, turn north until you find the sign for the Parque Municipal.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 1,3 km

**Average duration:** 1h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 30 metres D+

**Type of path:** somewhat rocky dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in a

Rede Natura 2000 Site (Arade/Odelouca).

There is infrastructure to support visitors, like the CIN - Centro de Interpretação da Natureza (Nature Interpretation Centre), a picnic park, an amphitheatre and a meteorological station.

**Points of interest:** springs of the Quarença-Silves aquifer, hydraulic heritage, Arade salt marshes, local wildlife (aquatic birds and birds of the Mediterranean scrubland).

**Owners:** public and local government paths

**Responsible Party:** Lagoa City Council

**Remarks:** the trail is located in the Sítio das Fontes National Park, and coincides with a fitness circuit.



One of the lakeshores densely covered with tamarisk trees



Iberian green frog, an amphibious species common to freshwater wetlands

Sítio das Fontes National Park is located on the banks of an estuary of the Rio Arade. The trail goes through a small, highly diverse area with salt marshes, mires, Mediterranean scrublands, riverine vegetation and stretches of fresh, brackish and salt water.

**A** – The Nature Interpretation Centre (CIN) is housed in a former rural building, now since rehabilitated, and usually makes available information about the area or public cultural exhibitions. Close to this building there's a restored noria, which once was used to irrigate the fields and vegetable gardens.

**B** – Near the Forest Ranger's Post, along the valley's south side, you can see a rich

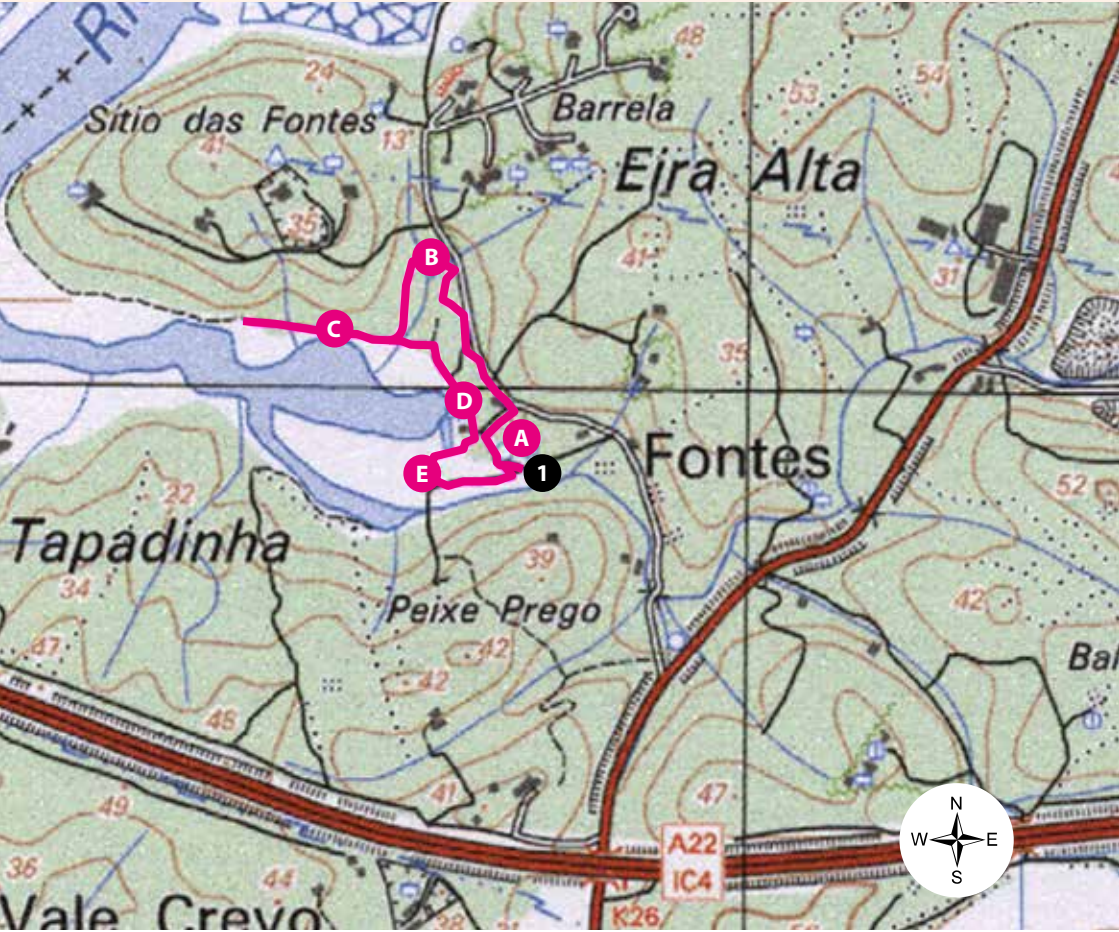
Mediterranean scrubland, on which grow species like the mastic tree, the *Genista hirsuta*, the Mediterranean dwarf palm, the kermes oak, Spanish lavender and various orchids (during the spring) grow, among other plants. There are also trees common to the Algarve's dryland fields, like the carob, fig, almond and olive trees.

**C** – Along the riverbank, in the salt marsh, you can see various species common to this habitat, like the succulent *Sarcocornia fruticosa*, the sea purslane, the sea orache, the exuberant *Limoniastrum monopetalum* and many species of reeds. At the end of the trail you are rewarded with a wide view over the river, and you can see the remnants of the old tide mill on the other bank.

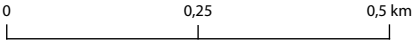
**D** – Close to the picnic park, you'll find the weir and its tide mill, powered by the springs from which the park takes its name. These springs connect to the biggest groundwater reservoir in Algarve, the Quarença-Silves aquifer, with an approximate area of 317 km<sup>2</sup>. The water mill is still used today to grind cereal and bake bread, activities promoted by the CIN.

**E** – Crossing the weir, from which you can see the crystalline springs, the way leads to the waterholes and the small ponds around them. You can see some small fish, and dragonflies patrolling the water looking for prey. The riverside vegetation is dense, forming a curtain of tamarisks, cattails, reeds, common club-rushes and other aquatic species, amid which you can see easily startled frogs. A riparian forest of poplar and ash trees was planted to line the way back to the Park's entrance.

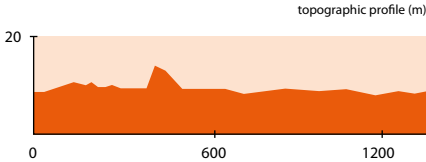
# Municipal Park of Sítio das Fontes Trail



**1 Start of the trail**  
37° 09' 40.98" N 8° 29' 07.05" W



 Trail



# Paderne Castle Trail



View from inside Paderne Castle

**Civil Parish:** Paderne

**Municipality:** Albufeira

**Location:** Paderne Castle

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the EN125 towards Albufeira, head towards Ferreiras and then Paderne; when you get there, follow the signs towards the walking trails and Paderne Castle.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 3,2 km

**Average duration:** 1h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 117 metres D+

**Type of path:** somewhat rocky dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the

Ribeira da Quarteira Natura 2000 Site, and is part of the national biodiversity network under “Estação da Biodiversidade da Ribeira da Quarteira.” A network of trails, both walkable and cyclable, cross this area.

**Points of interest:** Paderne Castle, Ribeira da Quarteira, Arab-inspired hydraulic heritage, Mediterranean scrublands, endemic flora and fauna linked to riverside habitats.

**Owners:** public paths.

**Responsible Party:** Albufeira City Council

**Remarks:** the weir can be difficult to cross during rainy periods.



A butterfly (*Zerynthia rumina*) and rosemary flowers lining the footpath



Ribeira do Algre, next to the dam and the water mill

The trail goes through a narrow valley, alongside which is Ribeira de Quarteira, and climbs up to Paderne Castle, a public interest monument. The river is at its best-preserved state here, and you can find some traditional water management infrastructures.

**A** – Paderne Castle is one of the best national examples of rammed-earth military constructions. Dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Almohad Caliphate), it was one of the first castles taken during the Christian *Reconquista*. The castle is an irregular polygon, with a single, massive Albarrana tower. Take note of the colour: an intense ochre, which contrasts with the deep green of the Mediterranean scrubland.

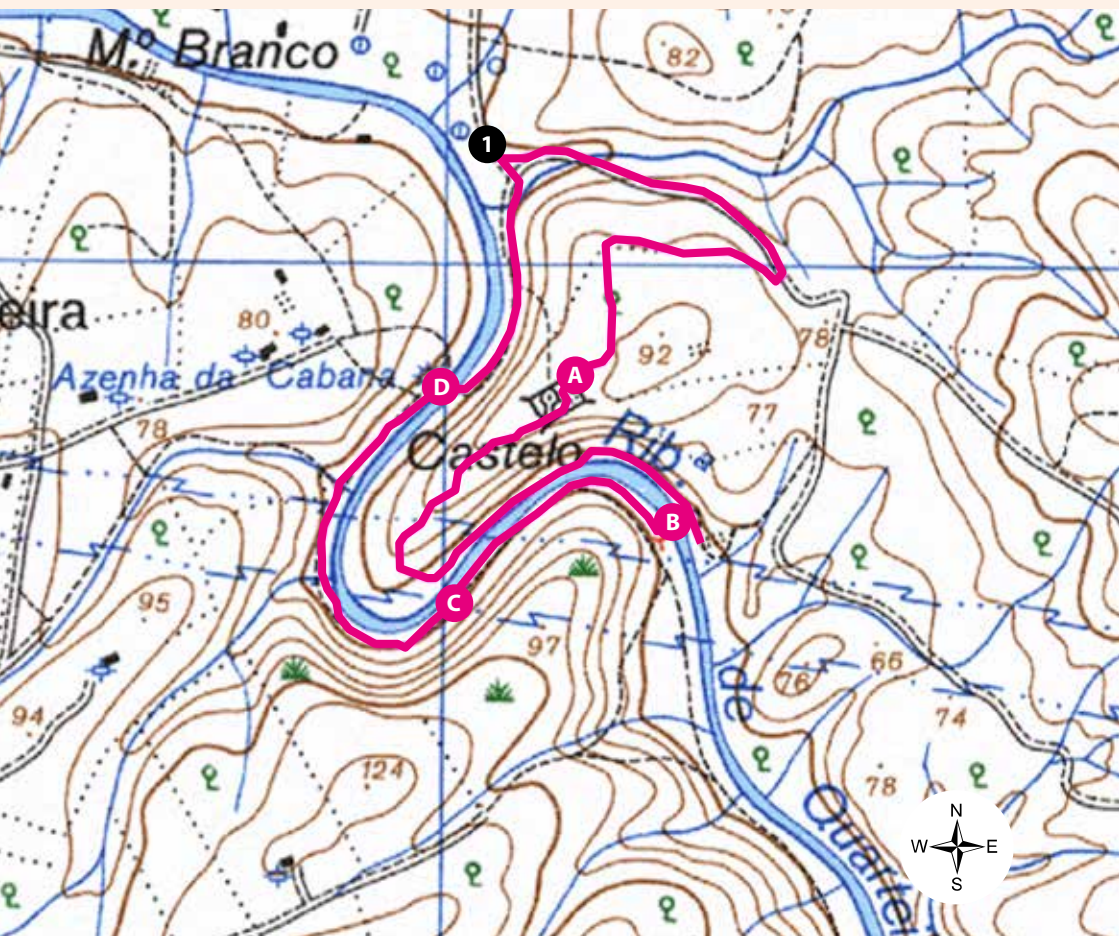
**B** – The Castle Bridge, with its Roman features, dates to medieval times and was built to support to the castle. It has 3 arches and 2 cutwaters shaped like a triangular prism. Near the bridge you can find the remnants of a water mill (Alfarrobeira Mill), as well as the old miller's house and the oven.

**C** – In the dark side of the valley grows a scrubland mainly composed of junipers, strawberry trees, Mediterranean dwarf palm, mastic trees and various kinds of lianas. Carob and olive trees line the trail and, on the rivershore, you can find the only living population of a particular kind of small daffodil (*Narcissus willkommii*). The sunnier area of the valley has a more scattered scrubland, with beds of rockrose, thyme and lavender. Here you can find the *Centaurea occasus*, a thistle species endemic to the Algarve's Barrocal.

**D** – Next to the Castle's weir you can see a water mill, dating to the Arab period. The local wildlife also makes good use of the water; there are signs of the presence of otters, skunks and hedgehogs, as well as various amphibious and countless aquatic birds (e.g. the grey heron and little egret) and passerines (wagtails, nightingales, warblers and finches, among others). The riparian vegetation includes typical species of pluvial riverlands: reeds and ash, oleander and tamarisk trees.

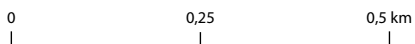


# Paderne Castle Trail

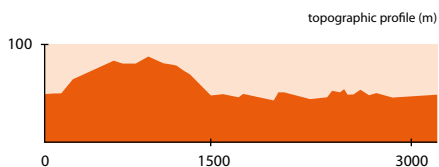


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 09' 36.40" N 8° 12' 03.80" W



 Trail



# Rocha da Pena Trail



The common buzzard, also known as the round-winged eagle. One of the birds of prey regularly seen in Rocha da Pena

**Civil Parish:** Salir and Benafim

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Rocha da Pena

**How to get there:** from Loulé, head towards Salir and take the EN124 towards Alte; before you get to the village of Pena, head towards Rocha da Pena.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6,4 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 275 metres D+

**Type of path:** somewhat rocky dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail located in protected area of Paisagem Protegida Local da Rocha da Pena and the Barrocal Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** monumental rocky outcrop, karst landscape, Mediterranean scrubland, flora and fauna.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Loulé City Council



Path along the southern slope



*Paeonia broteri*, a shrubby plant common in shady and rocky areas

Rocha da Pena is a prominent rocky outcrop of the Algarve's Barrocal. Its particular orography gives rise to an impressive diversity of fauna and flora in a relatively small area.

**A** – A mixed woodland of carob, wild olive and holm oak trees covers the outcrop; incredibly rare plants grow here, like the *Doronicum tournefortii* (under the holm oaks), or the *Narcissus calcicola* and the *Bellevalia hackelii* in open ground.

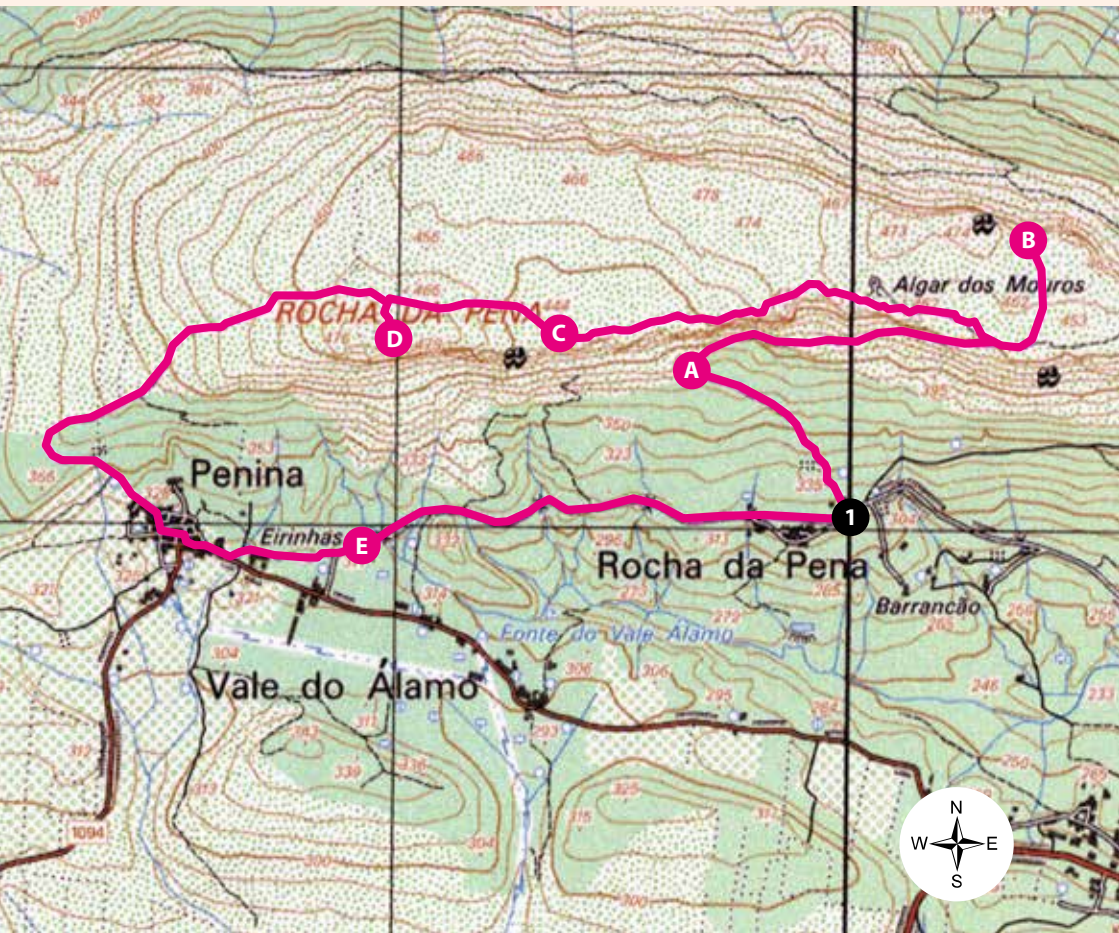
**B** – From here you can see the grooved landscape of Serra do Caldeirão to the north. Nearby you can find the Algar dos Mouros, one of the biggest karst galleries of the Algarve. The legends say the moors took shelter here during the reconquest of Salir, by D. Paio Peres Correia, in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays the galleries are inhabited by the common bent-wing bat and the lesser mouse-eared bat. Their colonies are an important assent in preserving these endangered species.

**C** – The plateau is covered in endemic scrublands of juniper and kermes oak; in the clearings you can see aromatic flowers such as lavender, rosemary, fennel and thyme, and the holes made by boars digging for roots and tubers. The path here crosses with two interesting stone walls, dated to the Iron Age.

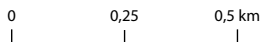
**D** – In Talefe, at 479 metres of altitude, you can see the soft contours of the Barrocal stretch out towards the sea. If you're in luck you may be able to spot birds of prey, some of which just passing through on their migrations, like the griffon vulture, the booted eagle or Bonelli's eagle; and others, resident in the area, like the common buzzard and the eagle owl.

**E** – The way down goes through the traditional village of Penina, and from then on, as you head to Rocha, you will have a good view of the south-facing bluffs.

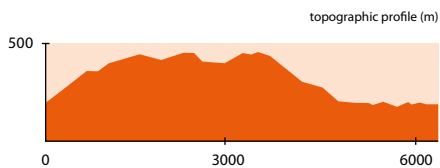
# Rocha da Pena Trail



**1 Start of the trail**  
37° 15' 01.15" N 8° 05' 52.53" W



 Trail



# The Tôr Trail



A bee collecting nectar from a branched asphodel, one of the many flowering plants growing alongside the trail's pathways

**Civil Parish:** Tôr

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Tôr

**How to get there:** from Loulé, head towards Salir; about 6 km out of Loulé, turn towards Tôr.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 5,2 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 112 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt, asphalt and stone

**When to visit:** all year round, except rainy periods.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Barrocal Natura 2000 Site

**Points of interest:** Ribeira do Algibre (also known as Ribeira da Tôr) and riparian gallery, cultural heritage, Arab-inspired Algarvian landscape, Mediterranean scrubland.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Loulé City Council

**Remarks:** the trail fords over the Tôr's stream.



Oak and carob forest around the village of Tör



Fording the Tôr river

The trail starts in the village of Tôr, climbing down to the wetlands and the stream, crossing through rural regions where old traditions are still preserved.

**A** – The village of Tôr stands on the southside slope of a hill of the Algarve's Barrocal. The white houses and the narrow, sinuous streets maintain their traditional layout. The local economy has historically been linked to the production of nuts, but nowadays this old but dynamic village is developing handicrafts, commerce and industry.

**B** – Tôr's bridge was built in the Late Middle Ages over remnants of a pre-existing Roman bridge, part of the Roman road which connected Milreu (in Estoi) to Salir. Three round arches remain visible today, arranged in harmony with one another. The central arch is the widest, and the two smaller ones are symmetrical.

**C** – The rural landscape consists of small vegetable gardens and orchards spread around the village, as well as vineyards and traditional, Arab-inspired dryland fields, covered in fig, olive and carob trees.

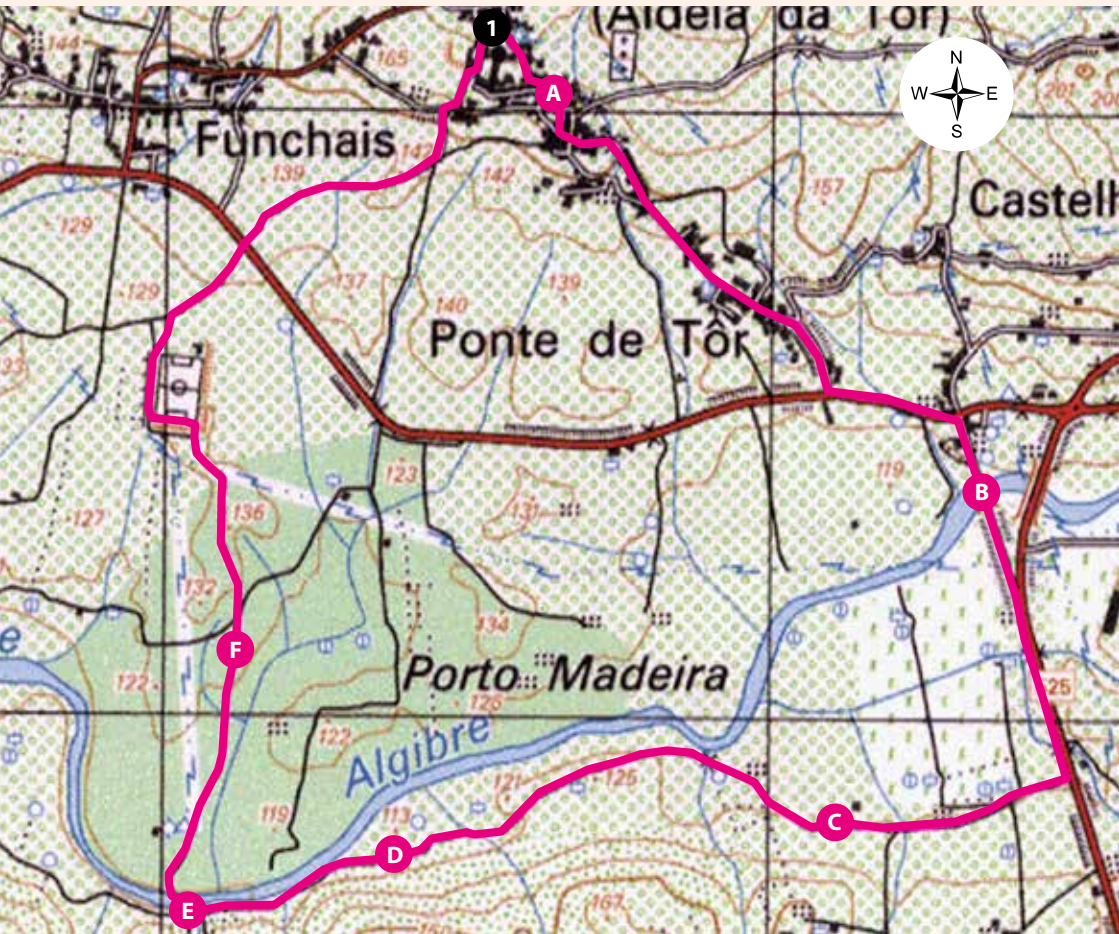
**D** – Tôr's wetlands consist of Mediterranean scrub, with monumental olive and holm oak trees rising among the shrubs of brooms, mastic, spurge flax, lavender, and sage-leaved and white-leaved rock-rose.

**E** – Near the Ribeira de Tôr, the air becomes fresher. You ford the stream between a dense riverside curtain where you can see plants common in these pluvial streams: oleander, tamarisk and ash trees. Due to the lack of light, plants like hawthorn, myrtle and butcher's broom grow here. The otter and the kingfisher, two iconic examples of local wildlife and symbols of nature conservation in the Algarve, they use this river as a place of breeding or passage between territories.

**F** – Back to Tôr, the landscape is covered in verdant woodlands of cork oaks, holm oaks and carob trees, accompanied by strawberry trees. The bird fauna is striking around these woods. With some patience and a pair of binoculars you can spot species like the golden oriole, the azure-winged magpie, the jay, the blackbird and also many species of warblers, nightingales, woodpeckers and blackcaps.

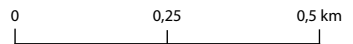


# The Tôr Trail

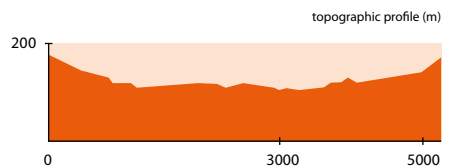


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 48.27" N 8° 02' 10.52" W



 Trail



# Fonte da Benémola Trail



Riparian gallery native to the Benémola stream

**Civil Parish:** Querença

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Fonte da Benémola

**How to get there:** from Loulé, head towards Salir; about 6 km out of Loulé, turn towards Querença. After crossing the bridge over the river, drive about 400m to the parking lot at the beginning of the trail.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 4,1 km

**Average duration:** 1h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 154 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in Paisagem Protegida Local da Fonte Benémola, in the Barrocal Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** Ribeira da Benémola and well-conserved riparian gallery, Benémola springs, Arab-inspired hydraulic heritage. Wildlife typical to farm fields and riverside habitat.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Loulé City Council



Spring next to the river banks



View over the valley, transition zone between the different soils of the Barrocal and the Serra (mountains)

This Paisagem Protegida (Protected Area) covers almost 400 hectares between Querença and Tôr. It is a privileged place for visiting rural landscapes and hydraulic heritage, as well as fauna and flora of the Benémola's riverside habitats.

**A** – The trail starts at Fica Bem, where you see an old lime kiln, in which quicklime used to be made by calcinating limestone. Continuing along the valley, you see the rural landscape of the riverside area and the leafy riparian gallery.

**B** – Around the river you'll find norias, water mills, weirs and millstreams. All this Arab-inspired infrastructure is proof of the complex hydraulic system that once made possible communal management and transportation of water through millstreams to the irrigation fields.

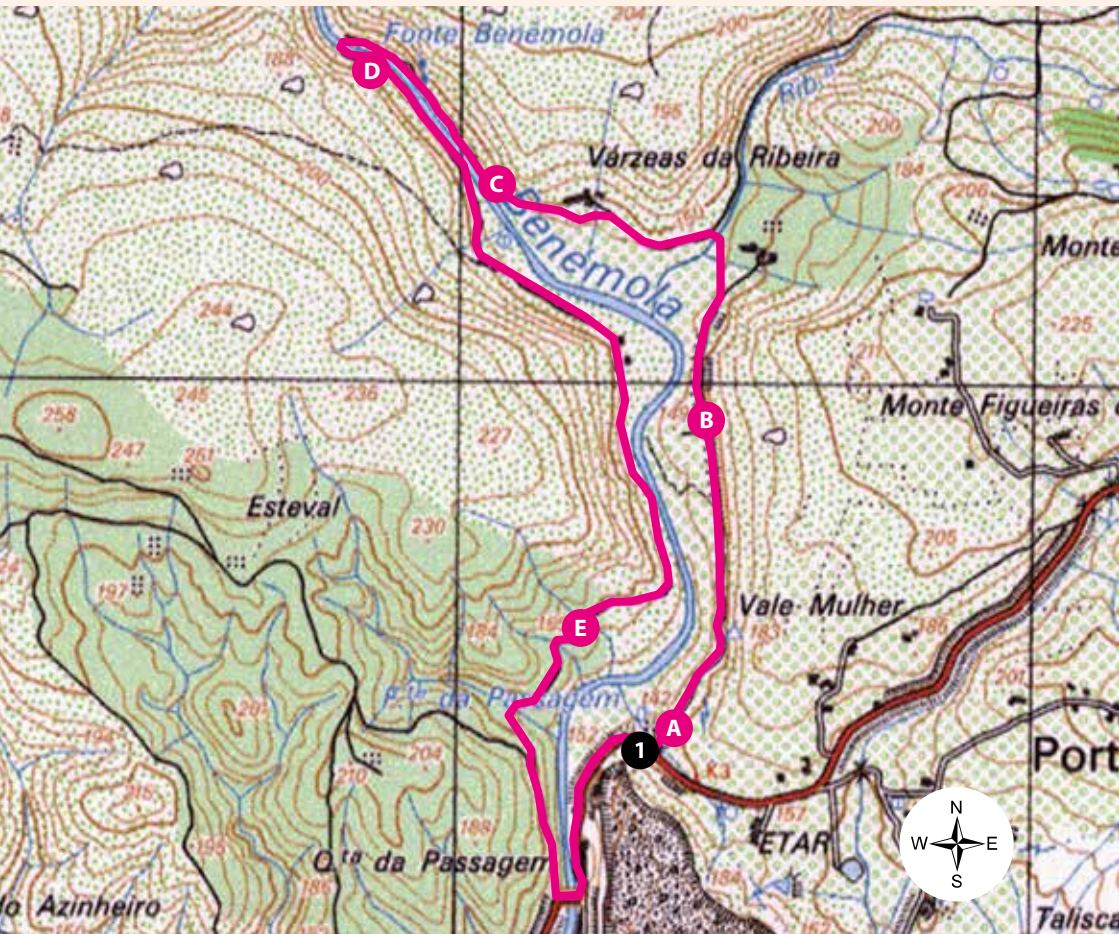
**C** – The *Olho* and *Fonte da Benémola* springs, some of the most voluminous of the Quarença-Silves aquifer, flow into the Benémola river and allow it to maintain a flow of around 60% during the summer season. The river is surrounded by a thick

curtain of willows, ash trees, poplars, laurestines, oleanders, tamarisks, brambles and reeds. Kingfishers, nightingales and grey wagtails nest along the shore. The water also attracts birds like finches, warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, jays and bee-eaters. The deep valley fosters the presence of birds of prey, mainly eagles and owls.

**D** – The limestone-rich slopes of the valley are covered in endemic flora of mostly junipers and kermes oaks, but also aromatic plants such as rosemary, lavender, fennel and thyme on the sunny side and strawberry, mastic, laurel, wild olive and carob trees on the dark side.

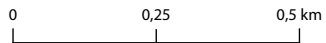
**E** – The hills on the far southeast of the Protected Area are hewn into schist landscapes and covered in cork and holm oaks. It is interesting to see the transition between the Barrocal and this scenery. Here you can find the remnants of a water mill, which the local population once used to grind cereal.

# Fonte da Benémola Trail



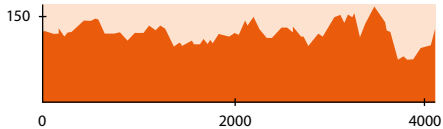
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 55.06" N 8° 00' 15.96" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Caminhos e Encruzilhadas de ir à Fonte



Much of this walking trail goes through old, walled paths

**Civil Parish:** São Brás de Alportel

**Municipality:** São Brás de Alportel

**Location:** Fonte da Mesquita

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 towards S. Brás de Alportel and then the EN270 towards Tavira, until you get to Fonte da Mesquita.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 8,4 km

**Average duration:** 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 310 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt and asphalt

**When to visit:** all year round, except very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in a

transition zone between the Barrocal and the Serra, across different geomorphological landscapes from south to north: the limestone *barrocal*, the red sandstone of the *Grés de Silves* formation and the old schist and geywacke massif.

**Points of interest:** rural landscape, Vale do Bengado, hydraulic heritage, the geological formations of Grés de Silves and Brecha Vermelhada da Mesquita (Cerro da Cabeça formation), Geoponto da Mesquita, terracotta factories.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** São Brás de Alportel City Council



*Geoponto da Mesquita, a geological point of interest near the "Brecha Algarvia" quarry*



Passage and stepping stones at the river crossing in the Bengado valley

The trail follows along a network of ancient paths winding between the Barrocal and the Serras which showcase ancestral agricultural traditions of water management and use of raw materials like clay.

**A** – In the middle of the countryside, you follow paths lined with dry stone walls and leafy olive trees, carob trees and holm oaks, until you come across an ancient well, the Poço do Monte Negro, built with exquisite details.

**B** – The Vale do Bengado is the frontier between the *Algarve de prata* (the limestone Barrocal) and *Algarve pardo* (mountainous region of schist and greywacke). The hillsides are covered in groves of monumental cork oaks, a calcifuge tree (not suited for calcareous soil). After you ford the river, you'll come across local riverside vegetation: brambles, oleanders, ash trees, poplar trees and, on the riverbed, Hart's pennyroyal.

**C** - A little detour will show you one of the numerous water mines in the valley. The mines supply water to the

Bengado's irrigated crops; these easy-to-grow vegetable gardens are cultivated with tomatoes, peppers, melons and watermelons, corn, sweet potatoes and cabbages, and citrus orchards are planted nearby.

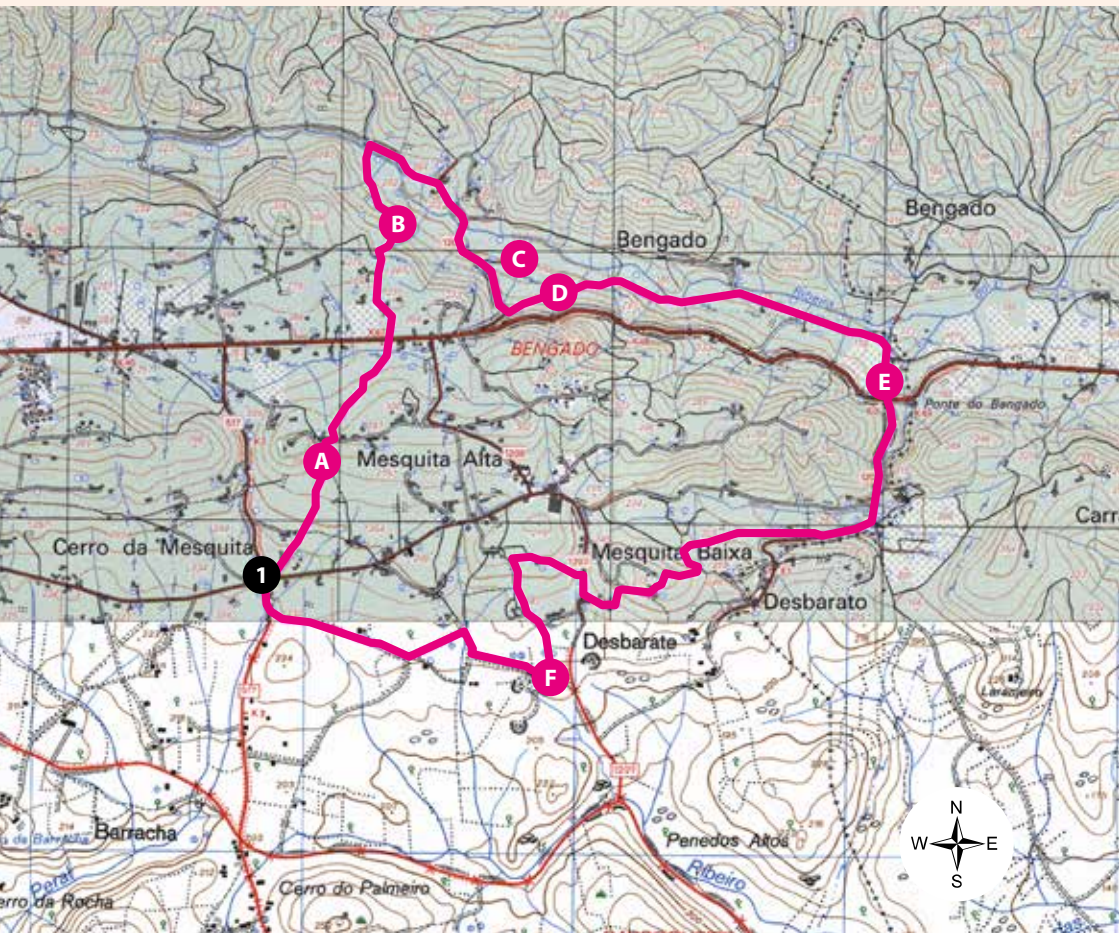
**D** – On the *Bárbara Dias Path* you cross a stretch of Roman road. You will notice the well-organised network of rural paths connecting fountains, vegetable gardens, mills and towns.

**E** – In the Bengado's terracota sheds, red clays from Grés de Silves are used to craft, by hand, Moorish tiles, glazed tiles and red bricks, common materials in Mediterranean architecture.

**F** – Back to Barrocal, the Geoponto da Mesquita is worth a visit. There, you can watch the extraction of limestone blocks rich in marine fossils, mainly sponges, crinoids and corals. It's the *Brecha avermelhada da Mesquita* formation, an ornamental rock of singular beauty.

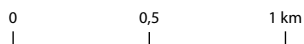


# Caminhos e Encruzilhadas de ir à Fonte



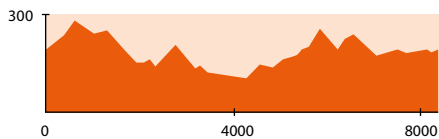
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 08' 49.16" N 7° 51' 16.31" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)







## Trails

- 106. Pedra do Galo Trail
- 110. Waterfall Trail
- 114. Fóia Trail
- 118. Trail of the Windmills
- 122. Lagoão Trail
- 126. Vilarinha – Vale Fuzeiros Archaeological Circuit
- 130. Ameixial Pedestrian Trail
- 134. Revezes Pedestrian Trail
- 138. Ribeira de Alportel Trail
- 142. *O Ninho* Ornithological Tour
- 146. Barranco das Lajes
- 150. Reserva Trail
- 154. Masmorra Trail
- 158. Montes Serranos Trail



# 4. Serra

# Pedra do Galo Trail



Trail inside the forest

**Civil Parish:** Bensafrim and Barão de São João

**Municipality:** Lagos

**Location:** Barão de São João

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the A22 (Via do Infante) as far as Bensafrim, then follow towards Sagres/Barão de São João. At Barão de São João, follow the signs towards Mata Nacional.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** partially, linear stretch of about 1 km.

**Distance:** 6,3 km

**Average duration:** 1h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 177 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Southwest Coast Natura 2000 Site of the Mata Nacional de Barão de São João (Forest Perimeter), and it is also part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** Forest Perimeter of Barão de São João – pine woods and cork oak forests and associated wildlife; Pedra do Galo; landscape of the Serra do Espinhaço de Cão.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Lagos Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses timberlands



A large psammophilus, a reptile commonly found in locations with abundant shrub cover



Pedra do Galo menhir

The path advances into the woods, through the Forest Perimeter of Barão de São João, through pine forests and cork oak groves, towards the Pedra do Galo, a vestige of the Iberian Peninsula's megalithic culture.

**A** – In the vicinity of the village, which is worth exploring to enjoy the traditional architecture of the one-story houses with their typical chimneys, the path is lined by eucalyptus and acacias.

**B** – The picnic area of the Mata Nacional was laid under the shade of stone pines. From this point onwards the path begins its descent along a gloomy and cool ravine. Under the canopy of the pine trees grow strawberry trees, gorse (mainly *tojo-gatum*, *Stauracanthus boivini*) and patches of cistus and Montpellier cistus.

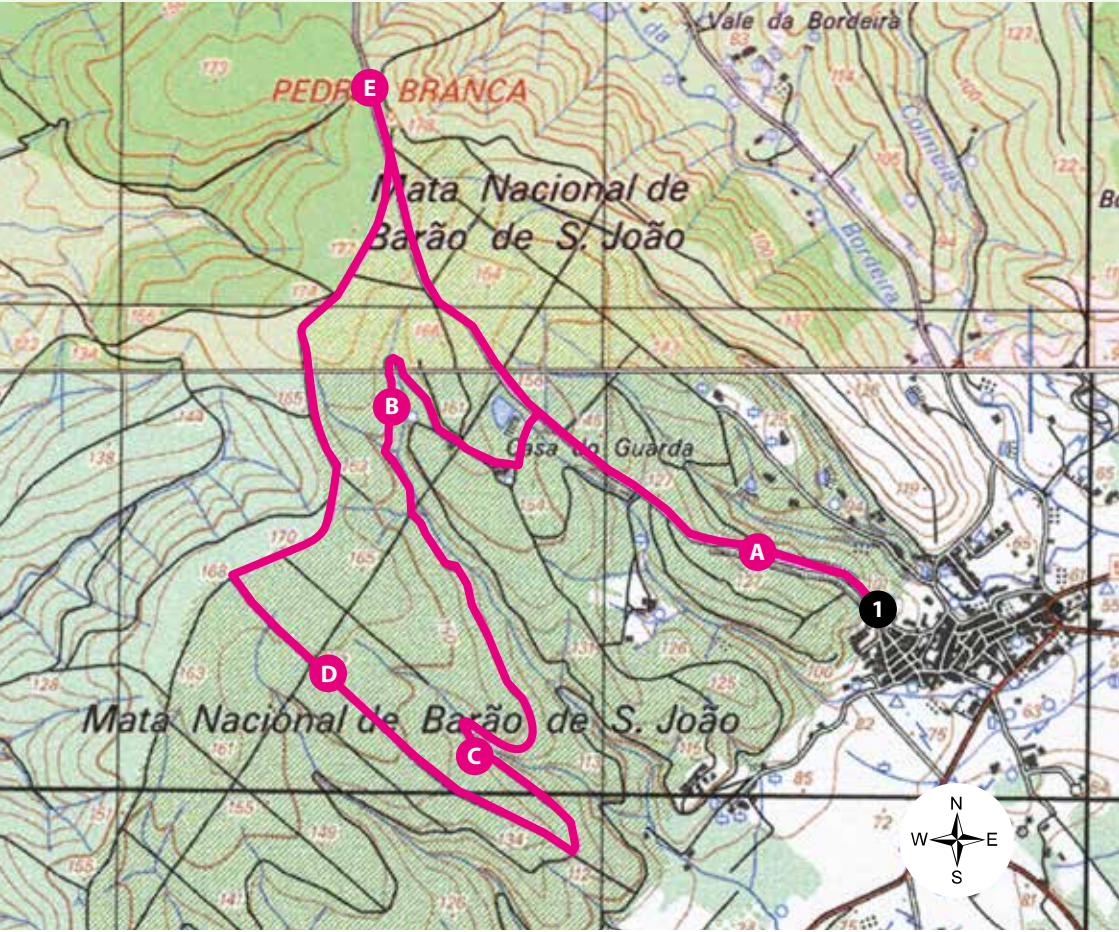
**C** – The path meanders deeper into the woods and the atmosphere becomes damp. The Mediterranean vegetation grows in height and diversity: verdant cork oaks and strawberry trees, accompanied by mastic trees and Mediterranean buckthorn. There are thick clumps of dwarf Spanish heath,

Spanish tree heath, and gorse. Beds of cistus, lavender and broom bloom in the clearings.

**D** – As you climb towards the windmills on top of one of the hills of the Espinhaço de Cão, you'll cross a vast patch of pine forest with gorse and cistus. Here you'll be able to spot hares and wild rabbits, or signs of wild boar and carnivores such as the fox, the genet or the Egyptian mongoose.

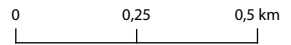
**E** – Near the road that accompanies the line of windmills, you'll reach the Pedra do Galo, a fragment of a limestone menhir (presumably from the Neolithic period), right in the middle of grove. From here you can see the many hills of the Espinhaço de Cão, as well as the Serra de Monchique and the highest point of the Algarve, the Fóia. In the surrounding woods, it is possible to see a wide range of passerines and birds of prey such as the little owl, the common buzzard and even Bonelli's eagle.

# Pedra do Galo Trail

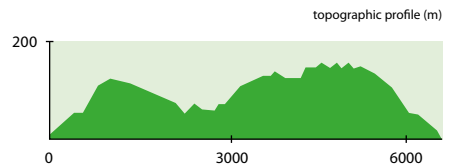


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 18' 22.67" N 8° 46' 46.90" W



 Trail



# Waterfall Trail



View of the north slope of the Serra de Monchique

**Civil Parish:** Monchique

**Municipality:** Monchique

**Location:** Monchique

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the N125 or the A22 (Via do Infante) motorways as far as Portimão (Porto de Lagos), then follow the signs to the N266 as far as Monchique and then to Fóia.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes, including a linear stretch of about 1,5 km.

**Distance:** 17,6 km

**Average duration:** 5h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 787 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt road

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very rainy/windy days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Sítio Monchique Natura 2000 Site, and is also part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** mountainous settlements and landscapes, Monchique waterfalls, flora e fauna.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Monchique Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses timberlands





Barbelote Waterfall

The trail crosses the north slope of the mountain range, and will allow you to visit the most emblematic waterfalls of Monchique and the flora and fauna associated with this exceptional microclimate in the Algarve.

**A** – The path begins in Fóia, where you can observe the chaos of syenite blocks, the characteristic landscape of Monchique's igneous massif. Here, the vegetation is low; mainly gorses and heathers, with some plants exclusive to the mountain range: the dwarf gorse, the *Paeonia broteri*, the common rhododendron and the delicate mountain sandwort.

**B** – The Waterfall of Penedo do Buraco flows only during the rainy season; it is a temporary stream that falls from a huge, practically inaccessible boulder, where timid birds nest. Around the waterfall are chestnut trees wrapped in brambles and ferns and, further ahead, terraces with typical mountain houses and subsistence garden.

**C** – After a long climb down through eucalyptus trees, you'll come to the Chilirão Waterfall. This is one of the headwaters

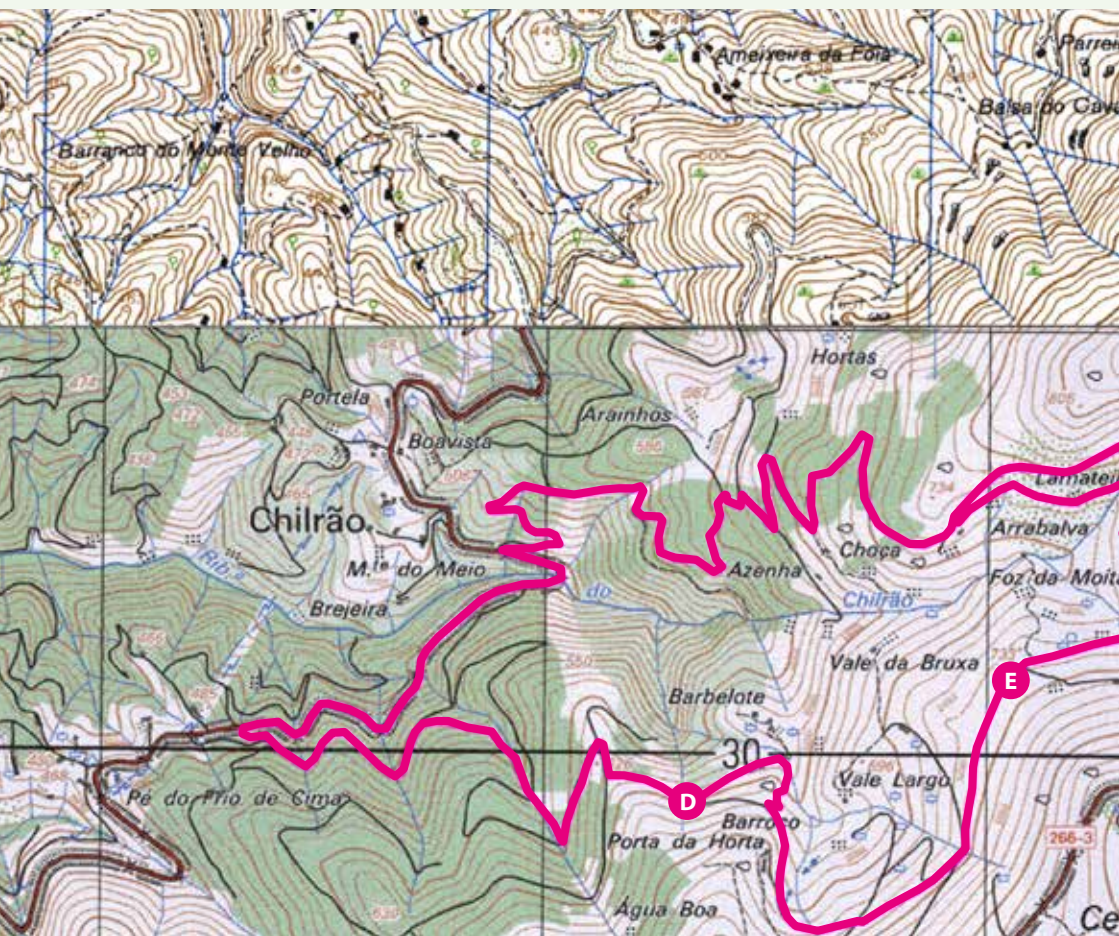


Common rhododendron, a relic of the Laurisilva forest

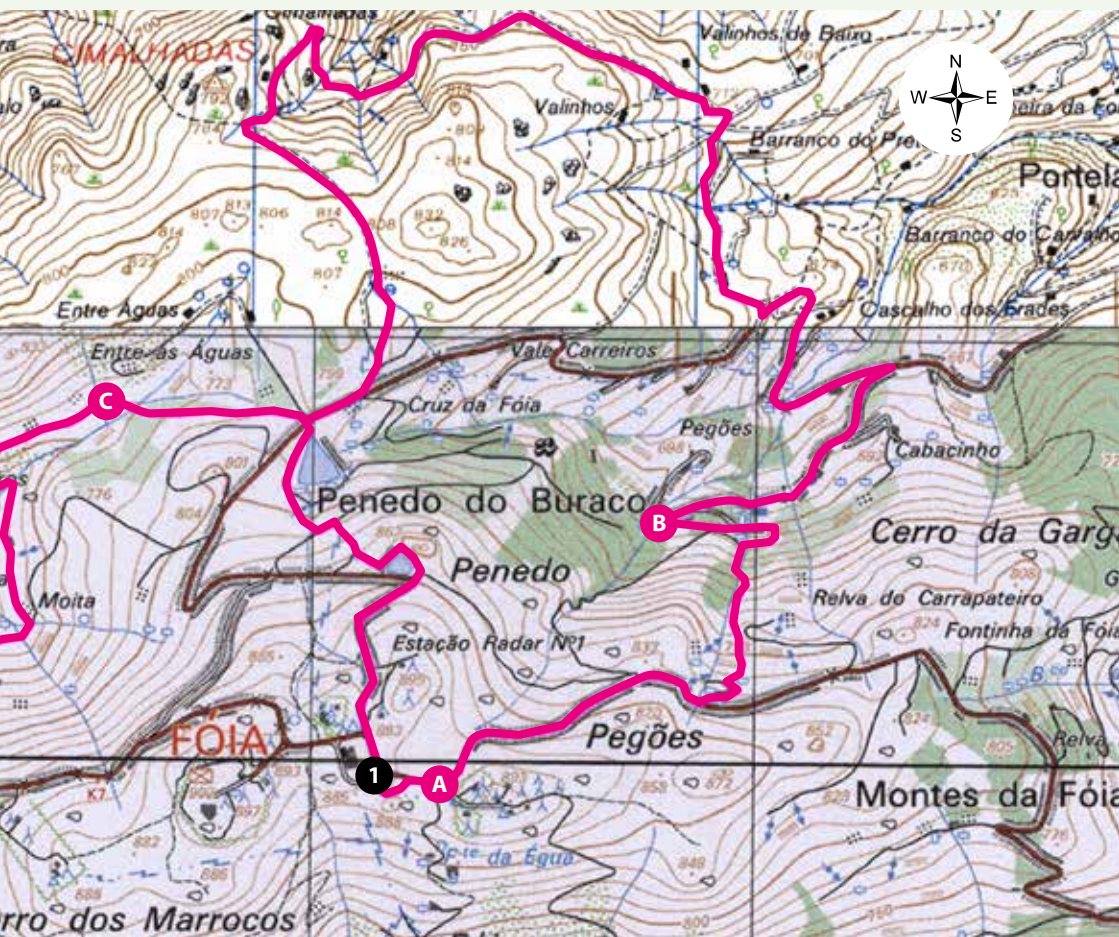
of Ribeira da Cerca that runs to the west, until it empties into the beach of Amoreira (Aljezur). The rocky wall of the waterfall is dark (hornfels) and its surroundings become greener due to the proximity of the water.

**D** – A forest path climbs towards the Barbelote Waterfall, the most imposing waterfall in the whole trail. The water rushes from a high wall of fractured blocks of rock, framed by lush vegetation. The surrounding slope is lined with cork oaks and lush strawberry trees.

**E** – This vast area of ancient terraces is a grazing site for goats and cows, though there are also small vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Looking to the west, the open horizon reveals the succession of high hills and deep valleys of Monchique, where, in the humid ravines, grow oaks that are rare in the South, such as the Portuguese oak, the Lusitanian oak, and the icon of the area, the Algerian oak.

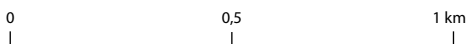


# Waterfall Trail

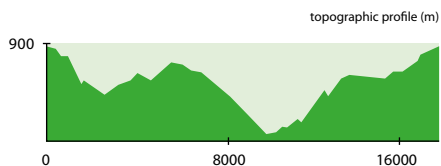


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 18' 56.05" N 8° 35' 31.17" W



 Trail



## Fóia Trail



Starting point of the trail at Fóia, with views to the coastline on clear days

**Civil Parish:** Monchique

**Municipality:** Monchique

**Location:** Fóia

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the EN125 or the A22 (Via do Infante) as far as Portimão (Porto de Lagos), then follow the signs to the EN266 as far as Monchique and Fóia's viewpoint.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6,9 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 355 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt road

**When to visit:** all year round, preferably during spring (flowering season) and avoiding very windy and/or rainy days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Sítio Monchique Natura 2000 Site, and it is also part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** Fóia viewpoint, mountainous landscape, particular climatic conditions in the Algarve region, flora and vegetation.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Monchique Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Hikers on the southern slope of the hills



Hawthorn in bloom

The trail starts in Fóia, the highest point of the Algarve at 902m, and crosses typical landscapes of the Monchique Mountains., Mediterranean and Atlantic influences mix in this igneous mass of syenite, resulting in a mild and hyper-humid environment, favourable to the occurrence of rare and exclusive plants.

**A** – In Fóia, the horizon opens in all directions, affording unimpeded views towards the Vicentine Coast, the mountains to the north, and the series of hills and valleys sloping down towards the southern coast. The view extends along the coast to the estuary of the Arade, to the east, and Ponta da Piedade, to the west. In this stony environment, among the small shrubs, you can observe some small passerines, such as the common whitethroat, the common linnet or the rock bunting.

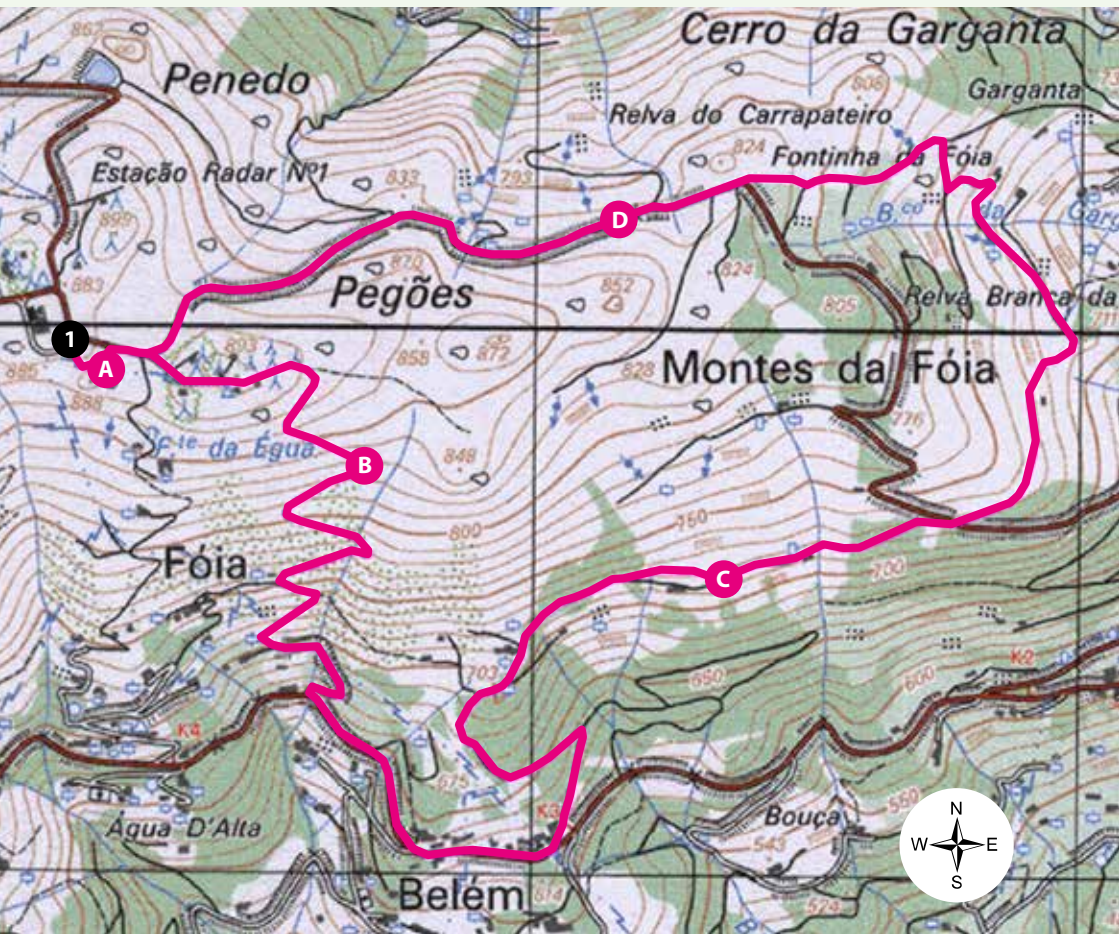
**B** – The path descends abruptly down a dirt path, between high scrub and terraces where cherry, apple and chestnut trees grow and goats and cows graze. The spontaneous vegetation consists of tall heather and lavender bushes, patches of gorse and

cistus, wrapped in brambles and ferns.

**C** – A dense forest of maritime pines and eucalyptus trees gives way to an open landscape, and the path goes on midway up the slope and crossing over small streams. There are monumental cork oaks and chestnut trees, and exuberant vegetation, with common hawthorn, showy bellflowers and rhododendron. The common rhododendron, a relic of Laurisilva forests, is endemic to the Iberian Peninsula, and grows only in Monchique, in the Serra do Caramulo and in the Aljibe Massif (Andalusia, Spain). Likewise, the Bonelli's eagle and the water lizard are two other endangered species that have found refuge in Portugal.

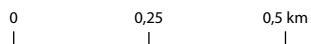
**D** – Back to Fóia again, this time up the northern slope. You can see the jumble of syenite blocks, and the low vegetation that signals the increase in altitude. Among the heather there are plants unique to this environment, especially in spring: dwarf gorse, *rosa-albardeira* (*Paeonia broteri*), the common rhododendron and the delicate mountain sandwort.

# Fóia Trail

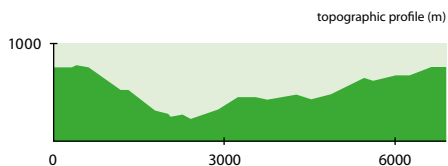


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 18' 56.05" N 8° 35' 31.17" W



 Trail



## Trail of the Windmills



Trail inside a eucalyptus plantation. The soil's moisture sustains a bed of ferns in the underbrush

**Civil Parish:** Monchique

**Municipality:** Monchique

**Location:** Monchique

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the EN125 or the A22 (Via do Infante) motorways until you are near Portimão (Porto de Lagos), then follow the signs to the EN266 and head to Monchique.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 9,4 km

**Average duration:** 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 485 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and road

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Sítio Monchique Natura 2000 Site, and it is also part of the Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** mountainous villages and landscapes, protected trees, Barranco dos Pisões and Moinho do Poucochinho.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Monchique Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses timberlands





A brook in Barranco dos Pisões, upstream from the Poucochinho Mill



A passage through a chestnut orchard, with bellflowers lining the path

The trail runs through the mountain village of Monchique and the surrounding landscape to the north, allowing you to see protected trees, oak groves typical of the mountains, and the Barranco dos Pisões. The entire trail is particularly interesting for observing the wildlife of the wooded areas and the birdlife in particular, with special emphasis on species such as the European green woodpecker, the Eurasian wren, the short-toed treecreeper, the Eurasian jay, or the Eurasian blue tit, among many others.

**A** – Right outside of Monchique stands the largest specimen of Norfolk pine in the village, a protected tree 150 years old and 44m tall. The surrounding slopes are covered in oak groves alternating with vegetable gardens and orchards where you can see apple trees and imposing cherry and chestnut trees.

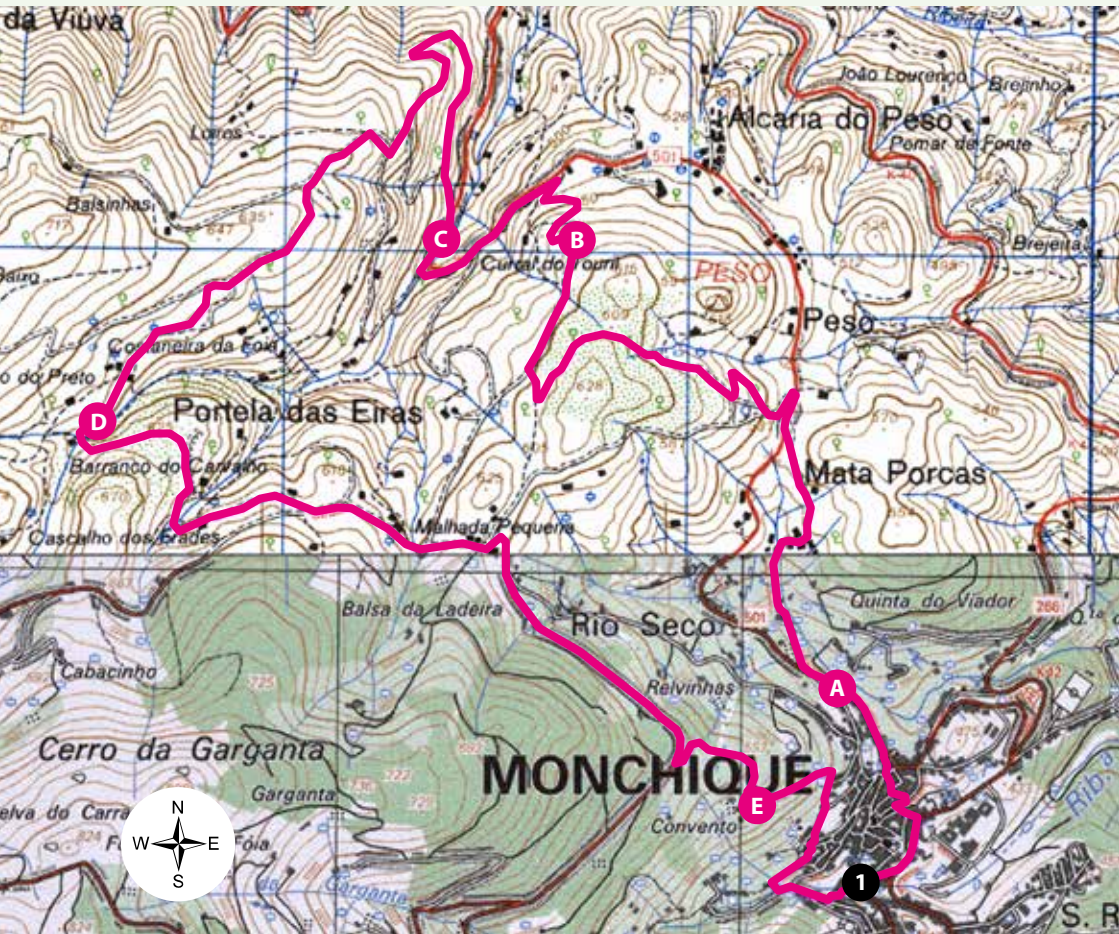
**B** – After crossing a forest of eucalyptus, the groves of cork oak and strawberry trees thicken, accompanied by beds of heath and ferns, and the road slopes down to Barranco dos Pisões. This stream is the main tributary of the Ribeira de Seixe, a river born in Monchique which demarcates part of the border between the Algarve and the Alentejo, and flows into Odeceixe.

**C** - Along the ravine, the sound of flowing water is a constant presence, and the vegetation becomes luxuriant. The riparian gallery is full and exuberant, forming a dense curtain of alders, ashes and willows. A superb sycamore guards the entrance to the leisure area; this protected tree is 150 years old and 41m tall. Here you'll find the Poucochinho Mill; initially built to treat wool using the *pisão* (a water engine with a wooden hammer that the water raises and drops on cloth), it was later converted to grain milling.

**D** – You will cross copses of eucalyptus, cork oak groves and the typical mountainous terraces until you reach the Barranco do Carvalho. Here, among alders, willows and chestnut trees, there is a protected forest of holly, an endangered and very rare plant in southern Portugal.

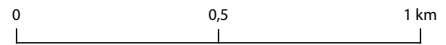
**E** – The Convent of Our Lady of Desterro, founded in 1631, stands over Monchique, enveloped by a shaded oak forest. The Franciscan friars who lived here influenced the imagination of the population, and the monument is much visited in spite of its poor state of conservation. In this spot, the view stretches over the village and surrounding hills.

# Trail of the Windmills



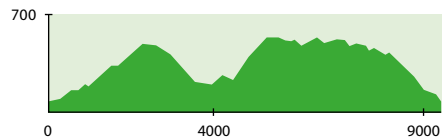
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 19' 04.65" N 8° 33' 23.67" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Lagoão Trail



Ribeira de Odelouca with its banks covered in dense riparian vegetation

**Civil Parish:** São Marcos da Serra

**Municipality:** Silves

**Location:** São Marcos da Serra

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the N125 (or the A22 – Via do Infante) to Albufeira and then the IC1 heading north. Turn off to São Marcos da Serra and head in the direction of the football pitch.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 8 km

**Average duration:** 2h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 182 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and road

**When to visit:** all year round, except very hot days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is partially located in the Monchique Natura 2000 Site

**Points of interest:** Ribeira de Odelouca, rural mountainous landscape, riverside vegetation and wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Silves Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve; it may not be possible to cross the river during the rainy season.



Fallow field, flowering in spring



Parish Church of São Marcos da Serra

The trail follows the Ribeira de Odelouca as it runs its course around the town of São Marcos da Serra, and crosses a mosaic of vegetable gardens, orchards and riverside vegetation.

**A** – Here, the fields and the cork oak forests of the wetlands are flanked by dense groves of cork oak and strawberry tree growing halfway up the slope. The landscape, however, is lined with the verdant riparian curtain of the river.

**B** – The trail winds along rural roads; the fertile lands of the valley are put to good use by the people of São Marcos da Serra. The village is surrounded by vegetable gardens, fruit trees, olive and citrus groves. Spontaneous species such as the hawthorn, the mastic tree, or the Iberian pear are a constant presence.

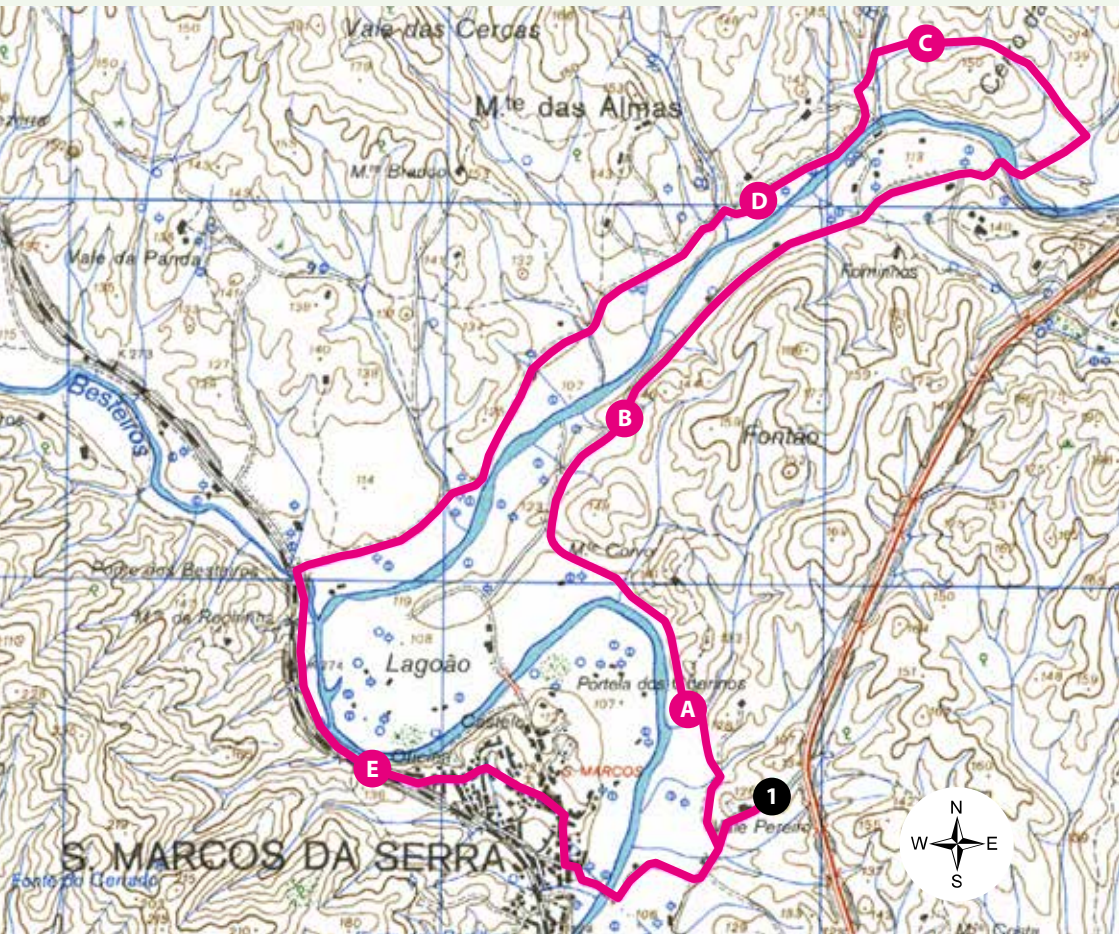
**C** – At the northern end of the trail, in spite of the occasional pool of water, the landscape becomes more arid. Pastures abound, along with patches of pinewood,

uncultivated lands, and extensive olive groves scattered amid crop fields, mainly rye.

**D** – Returning to the vicinity of the river, you can find typical species of the riparian vegetation of the Algarve — ash, tamarisk, willow and poplar trees, wild roses, wild grapevines and brambles. Verdant cork trees, too, near the water. Doves, golden orioles, common kingfishers, azure-winged magpies, wild rabbits, green frogs and rats are only some of the many species that can be seen here.

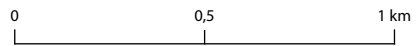
**E** – In Lagoão, just outside of São Marcos, the plain widens into a wide wetland, made up of a mosaic of orchards and vegetable gardens. The Fonte Nova do Serrado picnic park affords a nice view of the river. While you cross São Marcos da Serra, you can visit the Parish Church, which overlooks the village. To the northwest side of the church square there is a typical 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney, one of the parish's icons.

# Lagoão Trail

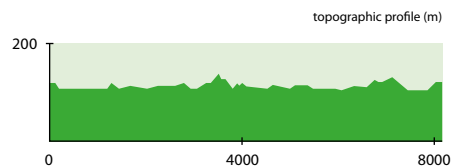


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 21' 43.47" N 8° 22' 13.62" W



 Trail



# Vilarinha – Vale Fuzeiros Archaeological Circuit



View of the valley, to the south, which part of the trail runs through

**Civil Parish:** São Bartolomeu de Messines

**Municipality:** Silves

**Location:** Vale Fuzeiros

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the N125 (or the A22 – Via do Infante) to Albufeira and the IC1 to São Bartolomeu de Messines, and then follow the EN124 motorway towards Amorosa. At km 2, there is an intersection from which you can get to Vale Fuzeiros.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6 km

**Average duration:** 2h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 245 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt road

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** well preserved archaeological heritage, outcropping of the *Grés de Silves* formation, Mediterranean scrubland and associated wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Silves Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses timberlands.





Tomb of an adult in the necropolis of Pedreirinha



One of the four menhirs of Vilarinha's alignment

The trail is organised around a set of monuments from different eras, transporting the visitor through a journey in time, from Prehistory to the Middle Ages.

**A** – Vale Fuzeiros is located between the Barrocal and the Serra, in an outcropping of red Triassic sandstone - the *Grés de Silves* formation. The village is surrounded by vegetable gardens, citrus groves and dryland orchards with almond and olive trees.

**B** – Along the ascent to Pedreirinha hill, you may see a curious series of sedimentary layers ranging from white to red (a unique site for observing the complete Triassic sequence of the Algarve Basin). The slopes are lined with Mediterranean scrub: juniper bushes are accompanied by cistus, gorse and, in the clearings, bylavender and thyme.

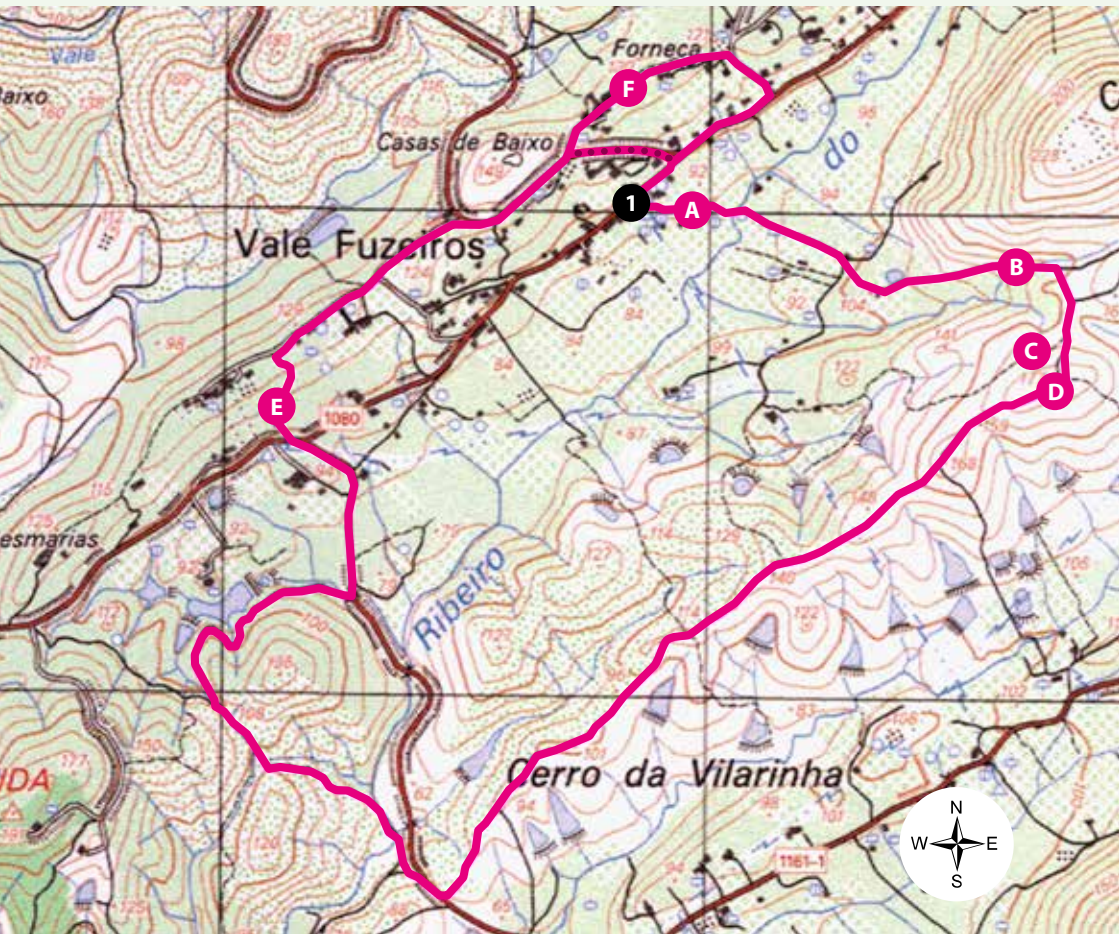
**C** – On the ridge, blocks of red sandstone emerge amid the dense vegetation of juniper and kermes oak. In these soft rocks a series of graves were carved, dating from the Early Middle Ages; the Necropolis of Pedreirinha, consisting of three adult graves and one of a child.

**D** – Walking along the ridgeline, you'll come across Vilarinha's stone alignment, made up of four red sandstone menhirs carved at about 6000 to 4500 years BC. The stones are laid out in a northeast-southeast alignment, and they are a unique occurrence in the megalithic context of Western Algarve. The fertile soils of these valleys and the hills to the north (which provide plenty of game and wood) have favoured the creation of settlements since Prehistory.

**E** – The Necropolis of Carrasqueira (Early Middle Ages) is composed of five graves carved in distinct rocky outcrops, one of sandstone, with two twin graves, and another of *grés*, with three individual graves.

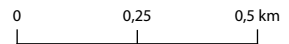
**F** – Crossing a small cluster of houses, you reach the Necropolis of Forneca, of the same era. The grave was a simple pit, closed by a single slab, suggesting a link between these necropolises and the Visigothic period.

# Vilarinha – Vale Fuzeiros Archaeological Circuit

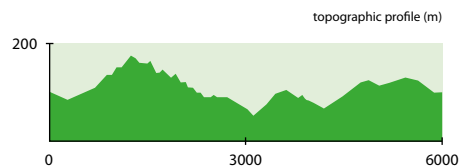


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 15' 07.26" N 8° 20' 52.17" W



 Trail



# Ameixial Pedestrian Trail



Leisure area at Fonte da Seiceira

**Civil Parish:** Ameixial

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Ameixial

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 towards São Brás, and then turn to the Ameixial.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 4,5 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 192 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt road.

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located in a region with a high concentration of Southwest Script epigraphs (the oldest script in the Iberian Peninsula).

**Points of interest:** Village of Ameixial, rural landscape and mountain forest, Fonte da Seiceira.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Loulé Municipal Council



Holm oaks among flowering bushes of Spanish lavender



Landscape with holm oaks

The trail runs around this mountain village which has claimed for itself the role of the Algarve's centre of dissemination of Southwest Script. The village also stages a now iconic annual hiking festival.

**A** – To the west of the Ameixial's centre there are ample views of the hills of Caldeirão and the mosaic of rural and forest parcels typical of the region. Subsistence agriculture engages a large part of the population, as a main activity or as a complement to cattle raising, beekeeping or cork extraction.

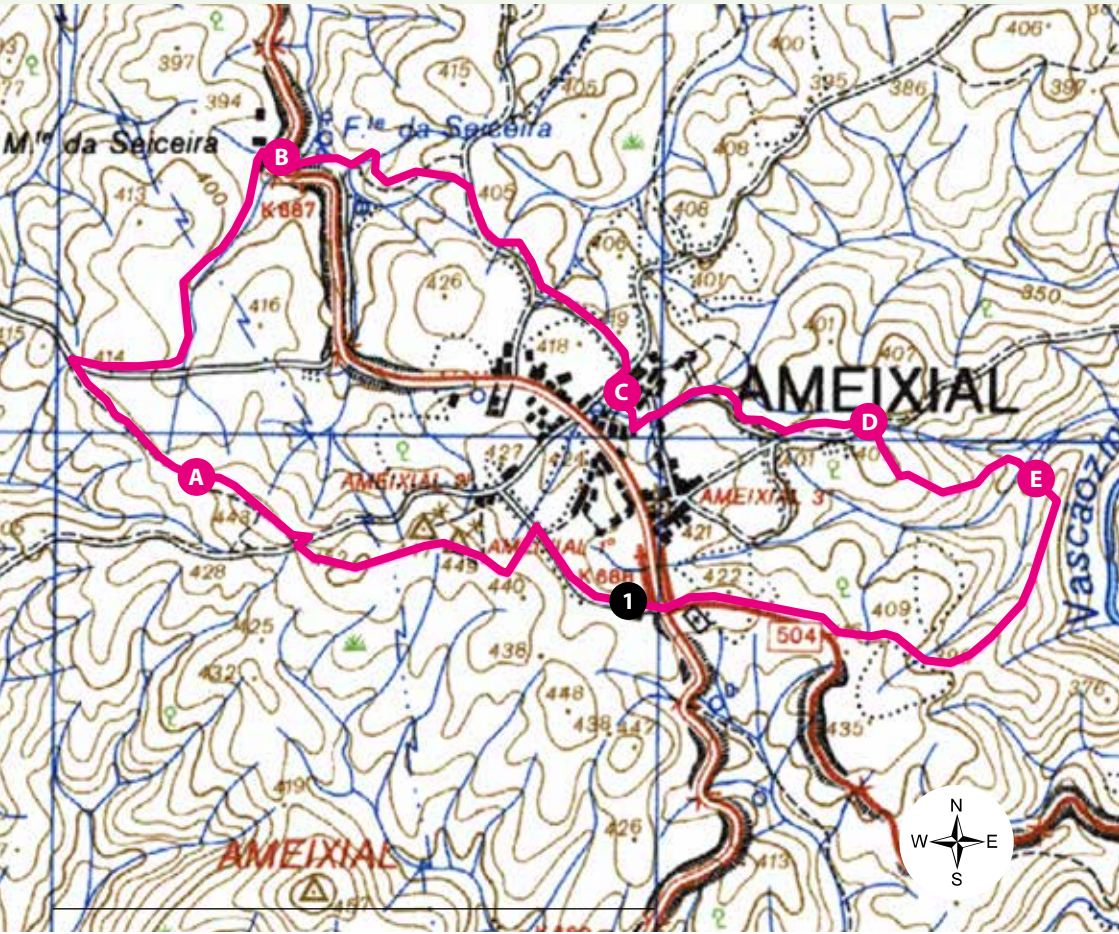
**B** – At the Fonte da Seiceira, the official venue for parties and dances, there is a leisure area with a picnic park, a reflecting pool, a lawn and shaded areas. The spring's water is said to be rich in iron and to have medicinal properties. Back to the Ameixial, small vegetables gardens and structures to support irrigation abound: wells, shadoofs, scoopwheels and fountains.

**C** – Many of the Ameixial's houses and the Parish Church feature elements of traditional architectural, including the use of schist blocks and slabs, visible on eaves and the corners of walls. Crossing the centre of the village, you'll pass by the old communal wood-fired oven and go through the lush Azinhaga do Ribeiro. The artistic installations alluding to Southwest Script are a constant presence.

**D** – From here, you can follow the dirt road eastwards for about 2km and visit the Anta da Pedra do Alagar, a megalithic funerary monument about 4000 years old.

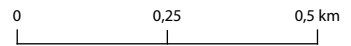
**E** – By going down a foot path towards the Ribeira do Vascãozinho, you'll cross a patch of eucalyptus. The surrounding hills, however, are dominated by forests of cork and holm oaks, accompanied by the typical strawberry trees, beds of cistus and lavender.

# Ameixial Pedestrian Trail

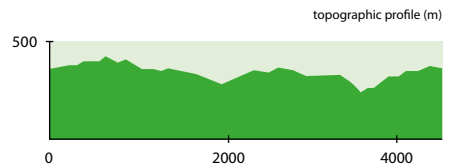


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 21' 42.21" N 7° 57' 44.54" W



 Trail



# Revezes Pedestrian Trail



Starting point of the trail, next to Revezes' fountain, with an artistic installation about Southwest Script

**Civil Parish:** Ameixial

**Municipality:** Loulé

**Location:** Revezes

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to São Brás, then turn towards Ameixial.

There, follow the signs to Revezes.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 13 km

**Average duration:** 4h to 5h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 468 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt road

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is partially

located in a Natura 2000 Site (Sítio Guadiana) and in a region with a high concentration of Southwest Script Epigraphs (the oldest script in the Iberian Peninsula).

**Points of interest:** Ribeira do Vascão, well preserved riparian habitats, birds, schist buildings (livestock pens, hay sheds and houses).

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Loulé Municipal Council

**Remarks:** a very interesting trail in the spring, when cistus and lavender are in bloom, but caution is necessary when passing near any hives. At the end of summer, the streams may be dry.





White stork



Vascãozinho river

The course runs along paths close to the Vascãozinho and Vascão rivers, traversing mountain landscapes and letting you experience the way of life in the Caldeirão mountain range.

**A** – Revezes is a small mountain village overlooking the Vascãozinho, practically on the border with the Alentejo. In the town centre, next to the fountain, is an artistic installation about Southwest Script.

**B** – Cork and holm oaks line the landscape, with characteristic cistus and lavender bushes, or cereals such as rye, growing underneath their branches.

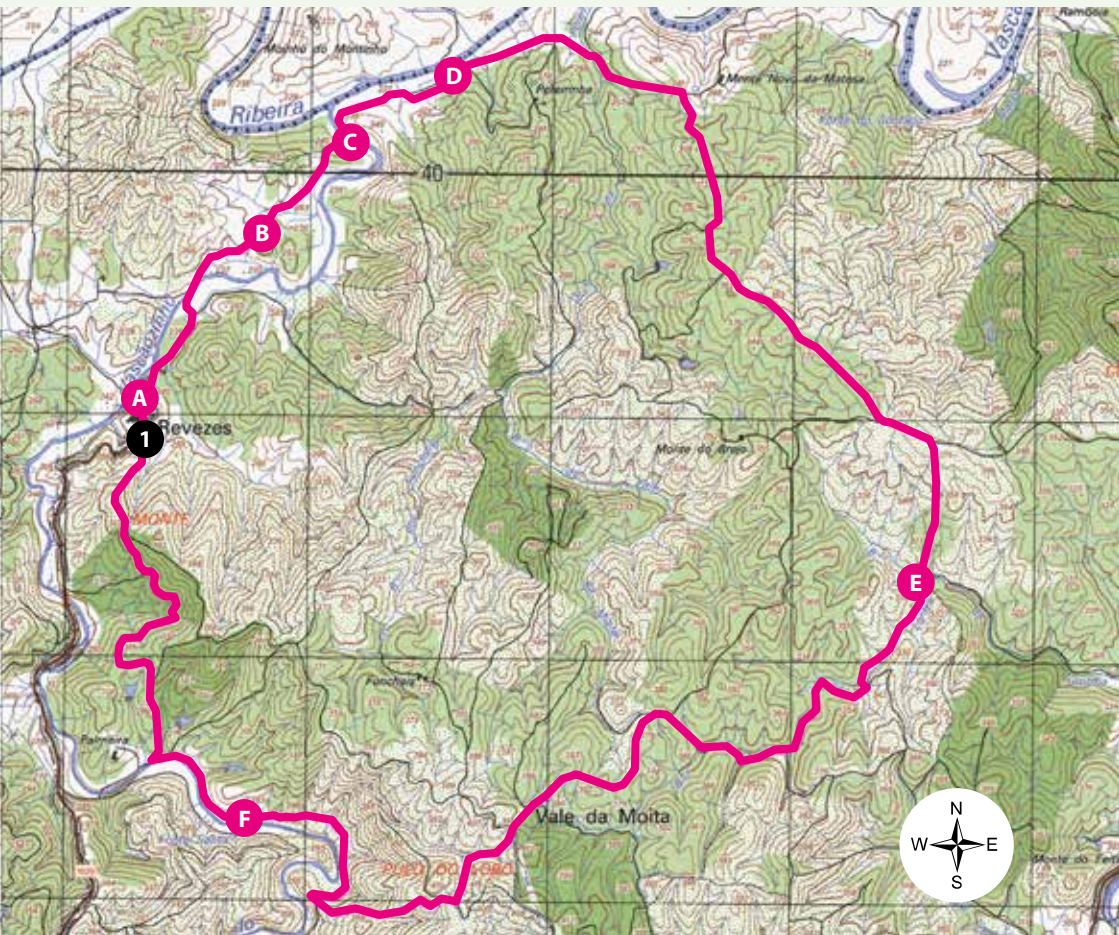
**C** – Vascãozinho is a river with a pluvial regime. You can see here the typical riverside vegetation of these water courses, such as the pond water-crowfoot, the *Flueggea tinctoria* or the oleander.

**D** – On the banks of the Vascão (the longest river in the Algarve, about 100 km long, which marks the frontier with Alentejo), there are signs of the Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), a mammal indicative of the good environmental quality and abundance of its prey such as fish, crayfish and amphibians.

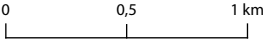
**E** – In the Barranco da Lontra, whose name indicates the regular presence of the Eurasian otter, the riparian gallery is exuberant - a closed forest of willows, ash trees, poplars and hawthorns, accompanied by cork oak and strawberry trees, wrapped in brambles and lianas.

**F** – The small vegetable gardens along the Vascãozinho's wetlands are interesting for observing passerines, particularly several white stork nests. Cork oaks dominate the hillsides, as do thickets of rosemary and green lavender.

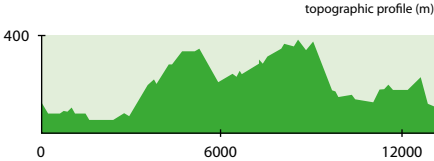
# Revezes Pedestrian Trail



**1 Start of the trail**  
37° 23' 33.96" N 7° 56' 44.76" W



 Trail



# Ribeira de Alportel Trail



Rural path among cork oaks

**Civil Parish:** São Brás de Alportel

**Municipality:** São Brás de Alportel

**Location:** Alportel

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to S. Brás de Alportel, and then follow along to Alportel (church yard).

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 12,3 km

**Average duration:** 4h to 5h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 378 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths, foot paths, and asphalt paths.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** partially

**Specific features:** the trail is partially located in the Caldeirão Natura 2000 Site and is part of the trails of Vale do Alportel "Passeio no vale... por caminhos de almocreves!" It gives access to two alternative trails, the Alcaria trail and the Várzea da Cova trail, for a total 28,3 km. These trails run along the ancient paths of the *almocreves*, people who transported goods from place to place on the backs of donkeys and mules.

**Points of interest:** Ribeira do Alportel, well preserved riparian habitats, birds. Rural landscape, hydraulic heritage and viewpoints.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** São Brás de Alportel Municipal Council



Ribeira de Alportel



Public washhouse and well with a piston-wheel pump, at Farrobo

The trail starts in Alportel and crosses rural landscapes, a transition zone between the Barrocal and the Serra, where old traditions are still preserved.

**A** – The path begins in the small arch under the N2 road. After a few metres, it reaches a path with dry stone walls (dividing rural property), flanked by verdant cork oaks.

**B** – After climbing to the Cerro do Alportel, the path continues through cork oak groves. Here you'll be able to see how cork is extracted from the trees.

**C** – In Farrobo, the single-storey houses, the public washhouse and the well with a piston-wheel pump form an interesting architectural ensemble.

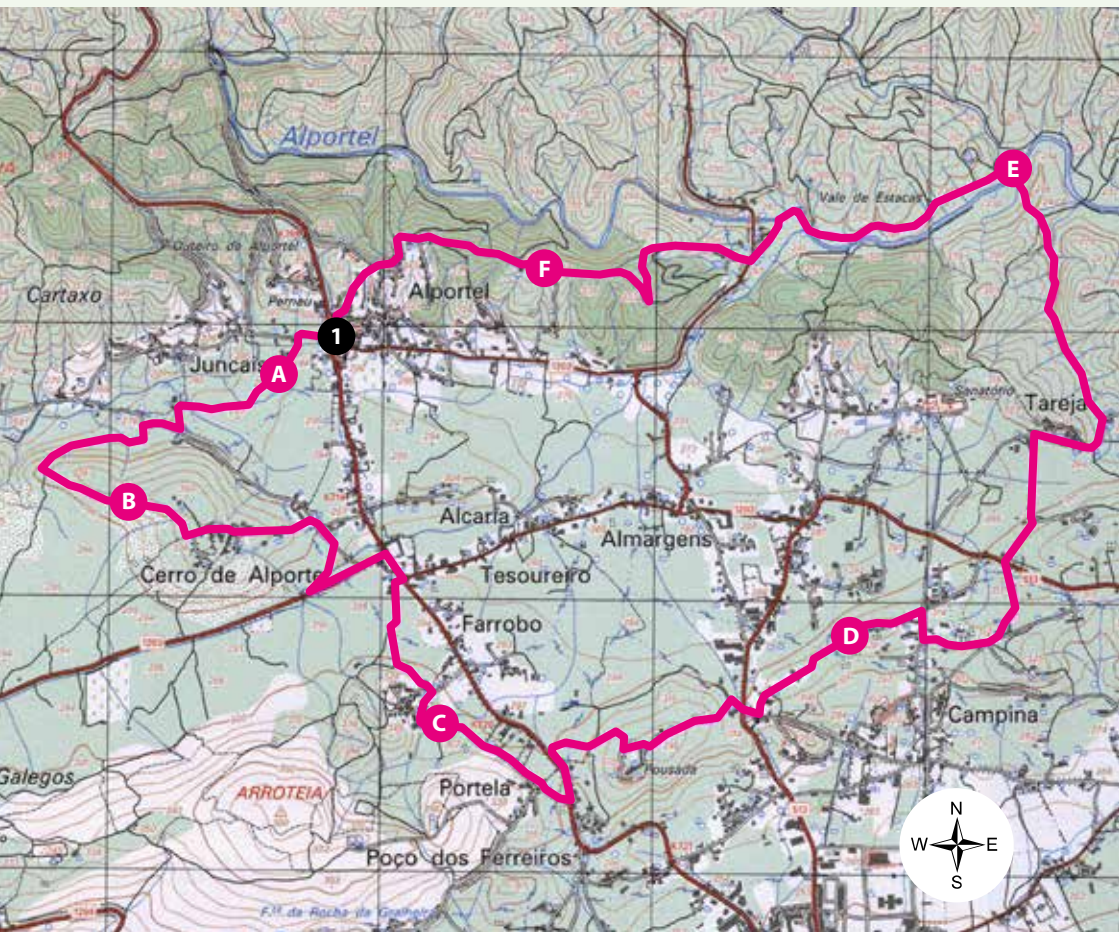
**D** – The Miradouro das Castanhas offers a panoramic view of the mountains to the north and the hillside surrounding São Brás de Alportel, to the south, with the Algarve's typical dryland orchards, with mostly carob and olive trees.

**E** – At Fonte da Tareja, the trail follows along an approximately 2 km long stretch which

coincides with the Biodiversity Station of Ribeira de Alportel. In this particularly exuberant riparian corridor, the arboreal curtains of ash trees, poplars and willows alternate with beds of oleander, reeds, rushes and brambles common in these streams. The river also has a remarkable diverse wildlife, with dozens of species of butterflies and dragonflies, such as the rare emerald dragonfly. Some of the many vertebrates that live here include the common kingfisher, or, for reptiles, the common tortoise and the viperine water snake. Monumental carob trees grow in the wetlands. The shaded hills, which naturally face north, are lined with lush cork oak groves, a sharp contrast to the beds of cistus and the sparse pine trees of the sunny slopes.

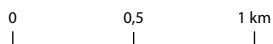
**F** – Passing the water mill and back to Alportel, the trail follows a ridgeline, from where you can see the mountains of the Caldeirão to the north, large cork oaks in the shaded slopes and the ruins of a windmill.

# Ribeira de Alportel Trail

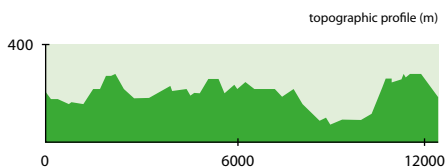


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 10' 33.50" N 7° 54' 33.08" W



 Trail



# O Ninho Ornithological Tour



Water mills near point A – Blue rock thrush

**Civil Parish:** São Brás de Alportel

**Municipality:** São Brás de Alportel

**Location:** Javali

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to S. Brás de Alportel and follow along to Alportel; there, follow the signs to Javali and Parises. The trail begins next to the sign indicating the village of Javali.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 2,5 km

**Average duration:** 1h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 113 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** this is a thematic - ornithological - trail, organised around six points associated with common birds in the territory. The information panels list the birds' habitat and nesting habits.

**Points of interest:** birds, ravine and riverside vegetation, hydraulic heritage, rural mountainous landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** São Brás de Alportel Municipal Council





Information panel



Cork oak forest in the village of Javali

The trail goes around the vicinity of the village of Javali, giving you the opportunity to get to know the rural mountain landscape and the habitats of some common birds in this territory.

**A** – Blue rock thrush

In order to reach the information point dedicated to this bird, you'll pass by typical dry stone houses with their gardens and orchards and a well with a piston-wheel pump. The blue rock thrush prefers rocky environments, inhabited or ruined areas, and steep river valleys.

**B** – Bonelli's eagle

The panoramic view at this point will allow you to enjoy the mountain landscape. This bird of prey typically dwells in highlands and high places, and can nest on top of tall trees. The surrounding area is populated by typical cork oak and strawberry trees forests of the Algarve, accompanied by aromatic lavender and cistus bushes.

**C** – Spotted woodpecker

In this small ravine, the forests of coriander, strawberry trees and pine grow and are surrounded by brambles. The woodpecker

prefers well-developed forest areas, especially cork oaks groves and pine forests.

**D** – Golden oriole

Here you can observe the surrounding mountains and the mosaic of well-maintained forest areas (mainly cork oak and pine), orchards and small vegetable gardens, prime habitats for the golden oriole, which feeds on the fruits of several trees.

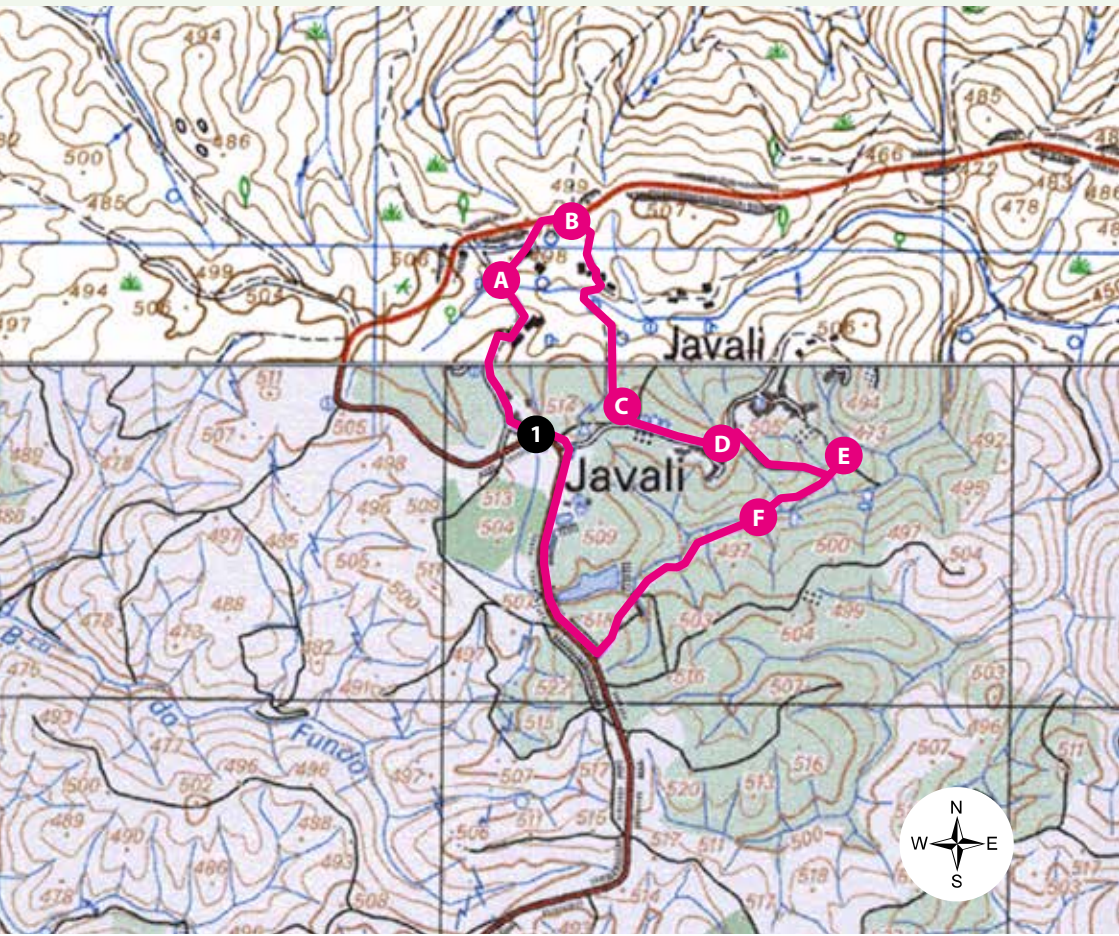
**E** – Partridge

The partridge, a bird typically associated with agricultural land and areas of scrub and bushes, has its information point next to a farm surrounded by scrubland.

**F** – European goldfinch

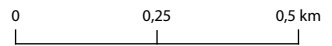
In this cool gully, the vegetation becomes lush and the forest of cork oak and strawberry trees is joined by a riverside curtain of willows, ash trees, lianas and brambles. Traces of old vegetable gardens are visible in the small river valley. The information point of this bird, common in agricultural lands, hedges and riverside vegetation, is next to an old *fonte*, or spring, the Fonte Ti Viegas.

# O Ninho Ornithological Tour



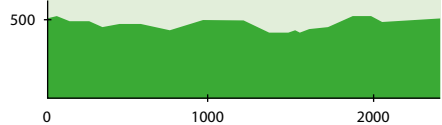
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 14' 04.58" N 7° 53' 36.25" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Barranco das Lajes



Looking north, over the ravine

**Civil Parish:** São Brás de Alportel

**Municipality:** São Brás de Alportel

**Location:** Cabanas / Lajes

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 motorway to S. Brás de Alportel / Alportel. There, continue to Javali, passing through Parizes and Cabeça do Velho until you reach Cabanas, where the trail begins.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 5,4 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 240 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located next to the Caldeirão Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** Vale do Barranco das Lajes, Poço do Ribeirinho, riverside vegetation, birds, landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** São Brás de Alportel Municipal Council

**Remarks:** due to the accented slope, we advise you to make the journey in the direction Cabanas-Lajes-Cerro da Ursa. The trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Cistus

The trail will let you discover typical villages of the Caldeirão and the humid and fresh environment of the mountain ravines. The path spreads along the Barranco das Lages, a valley of schist and greywacke carved by the waters. Large slabs of greywacke are a common sight.

**A** – Crossing the villages of Cabanas and Lajes, and coming down rural roads towards the valley, there are lush cork oaks and accompanying vegetation with an abundance of species gum rockrose, green lavender and poplar-leaved rockrose, typical of schist mountains. This vegetation cover is very interesting for a number of birds, especially passerines (e.g., golden orioles, Eurasian nuthatches, great tits).

**B** – In the valley, several streams intersect the schist-greywacke formations. In these places, willows are accompanied by thickets of brambles, ferns and bulrushes, along with typical species of the rivers of the Algarve - like oleanders and showy annual plants such as the wild leek.

**C** – In the wetlands of the main watercourse, there are small vegetable gardens and the Poço do Ribeirinho, an old fountain where cattle were brought to drink, which is part of the region's hydraulic heritage.

**D** – Leaving the valley behind, the path to Cerro da Ursa follows rural roads and a track with greywacke slab steps. The Cerro is the highest point here, offering a panoramic view of both the ravine and the surrounding mountains.

**E** – The highest part of the trail, in Cabanas, and along the summit until it begins to descend into the valley, may be a good place to observe some of the most interesting birds of the Caldeirão mountain range, like the short-toed snake eagle or the crow.



Graywacke slab

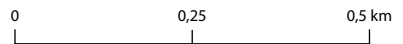


# Barranco das Lajes

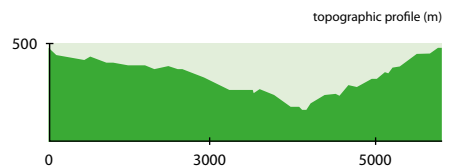


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 14' 58.29" N 7° 49' 04.48" W



 Trail



## Reserva Trail



Slope covered in holm oak, cork oak and stone pine groves

**Civil Parish:** Cachopo

**Municipality:** Tavira

**Location:** Feiteira

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to São Brás de Alportel and Barranco do Velho; there, turn towards Cachopo, and stop at Feiteira.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 5,9 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 285 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located next to the Caldeirão Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** settlement of Feiteira, mountain landscape and associated flora and fauna.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** In Loco - Associação para o Desenvolvimento e Cidadania e Junta de Freguesia de cachopo

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. The Discovery Centre in Feiteira is equipped to host visitors.





Monumental eucalyptus tree at the start of the trail



Strawberry tree blossoms

This trail crosses forest paths through the hills to the north of the village of Feiteira, and shows the characteristic landscapes of the Serra do Caldeirão.

**A** – Near the Discovery Centre of Feiteira (Centro da Descoberta da Feiteira), two large “sentinel”-like cork oaks signal the entrance to the trail, next to the ruins of a schist house. Further on, a monumental eucalyptus seems to fulfil the same role. In the surrounding area you can see the houses of Feiteira, its subsistence vegetable gardens predominantly taken up by grapevines, and great piles of cork.

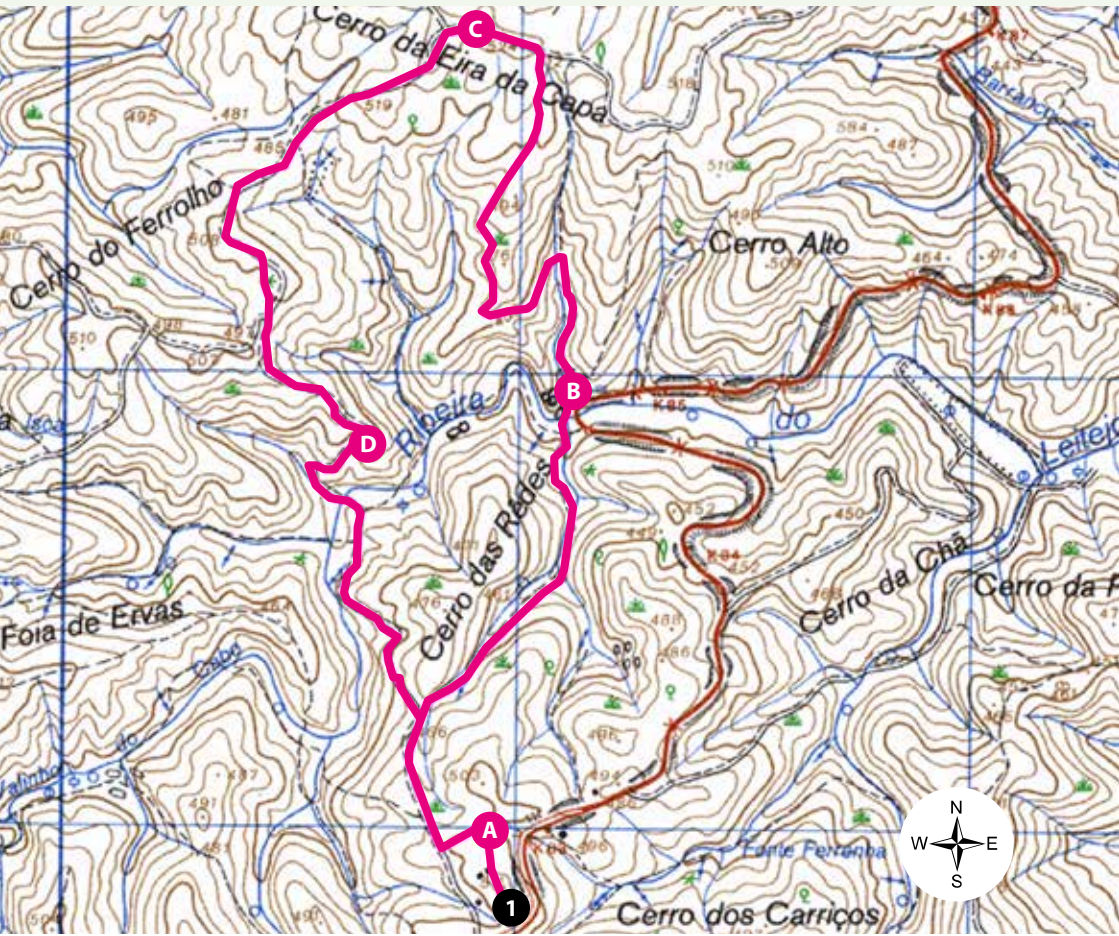
**B** – While crossing the Ribeira do Leitejo you can see the native vegetation of these pluvial water courses: curtains of willows and oleander, communities of reeds and bulrushes, brambles and rose bushes. On the surrounding slopes grow lush groves of cork oak and strawberry trees, alternating with patches of pinewoods.

**C** – The summit of Cerro da Eira da Capa

offers panoramic views of the mountainous terrain, with the Figueirinha mountain and its windmill visible to the west. Here, among the pines and eucalyptus, can predominantly be found the typical vegetation of the Mediterranean scrubland: cistus, Spanish lavender, gorse, rosemary and Italian strawflower. Among the vegetation you may see animals such as the wild rabbit, the partridge and various reptiles (lizards, snakes), or signs of the presence of mammals such as the wild boar or the fox. There are also many birds, and occasionally you will be able to see some of the species of eagles recorded in the hills of the Algarve.

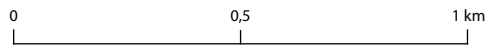
**D** – The way back to Ribeira do Leitejo crosses dense forests of cork oak and strawberry trees, with bushes of heather and rockroses in the undergrowth. Recent plantations of cork oak occupy vast swathes of land. While crossing the ford of the river running between cliffs of schist and greywacke, you will see vegetable gardens and olive groves in the wetlands.

# Reserva Trail

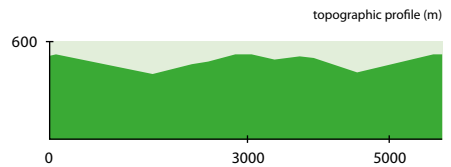


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 16' 49.66" N 7° 51' 43.45" W



 Trail



# Masmorra Trail



Anta da Masmorra

**Civil Parish:** Cachopo

**Municipality:** Tavira

**Location:** Mealha

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to São Brás de Alportel and then Cachopo. There, turn to Martim Longo, until you come across the sign to Mealha.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 5,8 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 230 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** Anta da Masmorra, haysheds of Mealha (a typical village of the Algarve), landscape, Mediterranean vegetation and associated wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** In Loco - Associação para o Desenvolvimento e Cidadania and Cachopo Parish Council.

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. The Discovery Centre in Feiteira is equipped to host visitors.



Stream near one of the fords



Hayshed in Mealha

This trail showcases the small village of Mealha, inserted in the countryside of the Serra do Caldeirão and the archaeological site of Anta da Masmorra.

**A** – Walking through the mountain village, you'll come across several examples of traditional architecture: houses made of schist or finished with whitewashed mortar, threshing floors and communal ovens. Near the foot of the pillory and the washhouses, a copse of holm oaks flanked by dry stone wall follows you towards the Ribeirinha. Here you will find the traditional *palheiros* (haysheds), circular schist buildings with roofs of rye and rush, where food was stored for animals. These are an ancestral typology of construction, popular in the hinterlands of the Algarve and Baixo Alentejo.

**B** – Along the Ribeirinha you will find a path that follows the watercourse and crosses through the village's vegetable gardens. Along with the verdant vegetation of the wetlands, there are forests of cork oak and Mediterranean scrubland where kermes oak, mastic trees, myrtle, wrinkle-leaved rockrose and purple phlomis grow. On the slopes, dry stone walls bound fields and orchards, mainly olive groves. There are very interesting birds in these environments, some of which may be observed, with a bit of patience.

**C** – Leaving behind the beds of oleander and reeds of the Ribeirinha, which you will have cross very carefully on the stepping stones in the riverbed, climb to the hill of the Masmorra, by paths flanked by plantations of stone pine, holm oak, and aromatic woods.

**D** – Next to the ruins of windmills, the view stretches over the surrounding mountainous territory, including the nearby hills of Martim Longo and Ameixial, or the distant ones, including the lands of Beja.

**E** – The necropolis of Anta da Masmorra is located between beds of cistus, in an elevated position on the hill. This funerary monument, from the end of the Neolithic period, consists of a circular chamber formed by nine pillars and a well-defined corridor, of which three preserved pillars still stand.

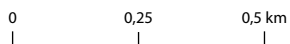
**F** – Climbing down the hill through pine forests and Mediterranean scrubland, you will once again cross the clear waters of the Ribeirinha and the well-kept vegetable gardens in its wetlands, along towards Mealha.

# Masmorra Trail

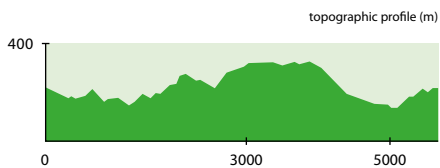


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 21' 48.06" N 7° 52' 18.40" W



 Trail



# Montes Serranos Trail



Panoramic view between Passa Frio and Amoreira

**Civil Parish:** Cachopo

**Municipality:** Tavira

**Location:** Casas Baixas

**How to get there:** from Faro, take the EN2 to S. Brás de Alportel and Barranco do Velho, and then continue to Cachopo. When you get there, continue towards Tavira. After 1,5 km, take the EM505 to Casas Baixas.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 9,1 km

**Average duration:** 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 334 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located next to the Caldeirão Natura 2000 Site, and shares a stretch with sector 4 of the GR13 - Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** mountain settlements and rural architecture, holm forests and associated wildlife, landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** In Loco - Associação para o Desenvolvimento e Cidadania and Cachopo Parish Council.

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. The Discovery Centre in Casas Baixas is equipped to host visitors.





Start of the trail in Casas Baixas



Rosemary bushes

This trail goes through typical villages in the countryside of the municipality of Tavira - Casas Baixas, Alcarias Baixas and Amoreira - and offers panoramic views of the mountains of the Caldeirão. This mountain is particularly important because of the rare Bonelli's eagle, an iconic bird of prey, whose distribution in southern Portugal has increased.

**A** – Casas Baixas and Alcarias Baixas are two villages where schist buildings are still predominant. At every step, you can observe the rural architecture of the mountain settlements. The surrounding holm oaks, olive groves and dryland orchards are a vital part of the economy of these populations.

**B** – Leave Alcarias Baixas behind by following a path skirted by dry stone walls. The landscape is dominated by pinewoods and scattered holm-oak forests as well as pastures, with stone corrals at the top of the mountains.

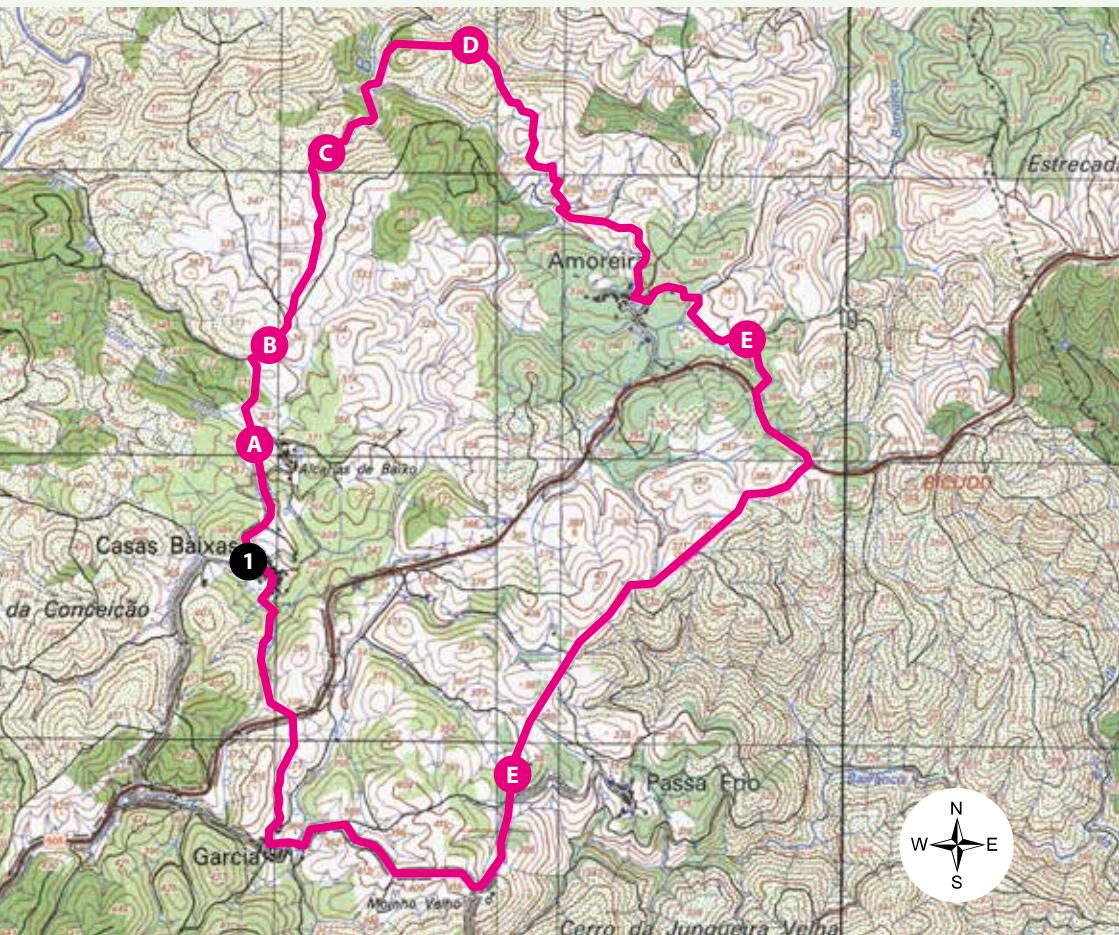
**C** – The trail follows along a ravine with a curtain of oleanders, reeds and bulrushes, which heralds the ford of Ribeirão, a

tributary of the Ribeira de Foupanilha, further ahead. Here, the slopes are covered with holm oaks, olive trees, wild olives and tall bushes of cistus, common rosemary and green lavender. The thick undergrowth provides for the presence of animals such as wild rabbits, wild boars, foxes and partridges.

**D** – The path runs around the Cerro da Amoreira through the north, across an area of stone pines and maritime pines. Here, the ravine of the Ribeirão deepens, and the view extends over the wide valley and the high mountains in the direction of Martim Longo. Centuries-old holm oaks cover the shaded slopes, among tall cistus bushes.

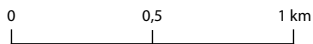
**E** – Passing through the picturesque Amoreira hill, the trail follows along ridgelines to the south, offering continuous views of the surrounding mountainous landscape. Near the hamlet of Passa Frio, old windmills and modern wind turbines coexist side by side, in an interesting expression of renewal of knowledge.

# Montes Serranos Trail

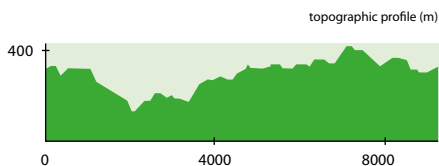


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 20' 35.18" N 7° 46' 54.87" W



 Trail







## Trails

- 164.** Living Memory
- 168.** Uphill, downhill
- 172.** Amendoeira Trail
- 176.** Caminhos da Fonte
- 180.** Boa Vista Trail
- 184.** Beliche Circuit
- 188.** Ladeiras do Pontal
- 192.** Terras da Ordem Trail
- 196.** The Charms of Alcoutim
- 200.** A Window to the Guadiana
- 204.** Venta Moinhos Salt Marsh Trail
- 208.** Passeio Pombalino



# 5. Guadiana

# Living Memory



Fontainhas rural estate in Martim Longo

**Civil Parish:** Martim Longo

**Municipality:** Alcoutim

**Location:** Martim Longo

**How to get there:** from Castro Marim, follow the IC27 until you come across the exit to Pereiro and Martim Longo; from Tavira, take the N397 to Cachopo and Martim Longo.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 14 km

**Average duration:** 5h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 335 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt tracks and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is located next to the Guadiana Natura 2000 Site.

**Points of interest:** typical *montes* of the Baixo Guadiana, mountain vegetation and associated wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Alcoutim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. It's possible to shorten the trip by about 4 km, following an alternative path near the *monte* of Silgado.



Planting of cork oak and strawberry tree orchards



Rural path near Silgado hill

The trail meanders along old rural roads, crossing small farms and estates in the region's hinterland, some already depopulated, where testimonies of the way of life and the local economy of this territory still remain.

**A** – Martim Longo is surrounded by pastures, pine, olive and arbutus forest plantations, and plots of cork oak, olive and almond trees with an undergrowth of tall beds of rock rose, Montpellier cistus and rosemary. Dry stone walls divide agricultural property, and announce the proximity of the *monte* of Fontainhas, currently in ruins.

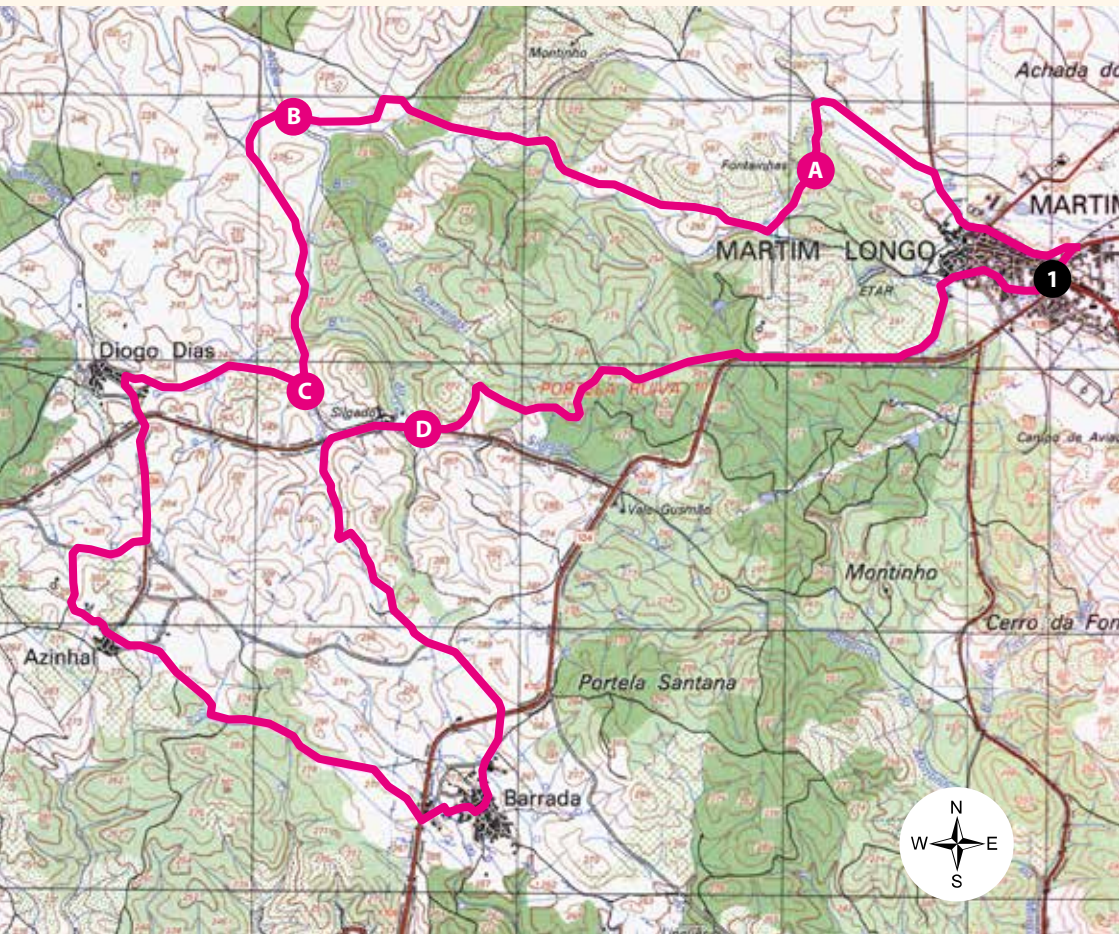
**B** – The trail follows the Barranco da Aldeia, where the vegetation becomes different, forming a curtain of oleander. On the slopes, bushes of cistus alternate with plantations of stone pine and olive trees. There are also recent and large-scale plantations of orchards of cork oak and strawberry tree, along with the installation of hives, activities that are part of the mountain economy.

**C** – Before reaching the village of Diogo Dias and near the community well of Silgado, it is possible to continue towards this place, shortening the circular trail. The section to the south of the Silgado valley crosses the villages of Diogo Dias, Azinhal and Barrada, and the landscape bears witness to the region's mountain economy: walled fields, holm and cork oaks, olive, carob, fig and almond trees, citrus orchards, and small vegetable gardens dominated by vegetables and vineyards.

**D** – On the way back to the *monte* of Silgado, crossing the old junction between it and the town of Barrada, it is worth stopping for a look at the details of the traditional architecture and the old organisation of these *montes*: the houses made of schist or finished with white mortar and their large vines, communal ovens and wells, dry stone walls and vestiges of vegetable gardens abundant with citrus fruits.

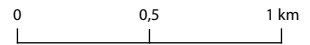


# Living Memory

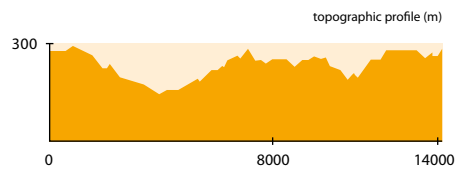


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 26' 22.55" N 7° 46' 04.22" W



 Trail



## Uphill, downhill



Fording the Foupanilha stream

**Civil Parish:** Vaqueiros

**Municipality:** Alcoutim

**Location:** Vaqueiros

**How to get there:** from Castro Marim, take the IC27 until the exit to Pereiro and Martim Longo. There, turn to Vaqueiros; from Tavira, take the N397 to Cachopo, and from there turn to Vaqueiros.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 12,8 km

**Average duration:** 4h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 477 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail shares stages with sectors 3 and 4 of the GR13 - Via Algarviana.

**Points of interest:** mountain settlements, Ribeiras da Foupana and Foupanilha and associated vegetation and wildlife, Cova dos Mouros mine.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Alcoutim Municipal Council.

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Confluence of the Foupasilha and Foupana streams



Monte das Ferrarias

This mountain hike will let you discover the typical *montes* of Lower Guadiana (dispersed settlements), an old copper mine and the pluvial streams typical of this territory.

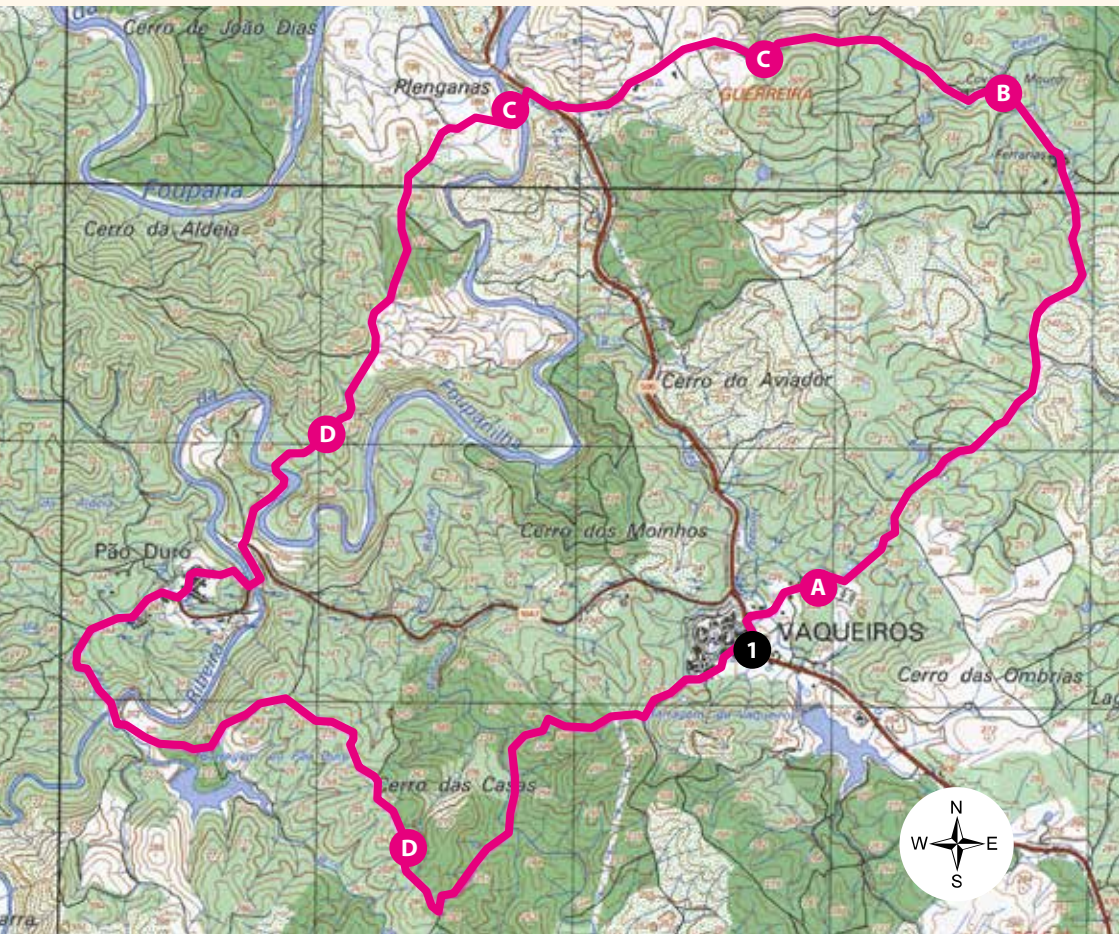
**A** – Between Vaqueiros and Ferrarias, there are frequent examples of the region's traditional architecture: waterwheels that retain their mills and their buckets, schist houses, chimneys with typical tracery and dry stone walls flanking pathways. Crossing the Barranco das Hortas between willows, cattails, brambles and pennyroyal, there is a covered well, suggestive of the proximity to the Baixo Alentejo.

**B** – The Cova dos Mouros mine is located in the vicinity of the Chalcolithic village of Santa Justa, about 20 km from embarkation points in Alcoutim. It is a copper mine with vestiges of use from Chalcolithic to Roman times. Modern extractive activity occurred in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; you can see a main shaft, 30 m in depth, where copper minerals were extracted from the greywacke of the Mértola Formation.

**C** – The trail follows a ridge from where you can see the valley of the river Foupana, and then crosses then the confluence of the streams of Foupanilha and Foupana. The landscape is steep, with the water cutting large slabs of greywacke. Amongst tamarisks, *tamujos* (*Flueggea tinctoria*), oleanders, rose bushes and willow curtains, there are water snakes, tortoises, frogs, fish, and a great diversity of insects, especially dragonflies.

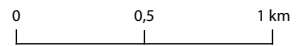
**D** – Up to Pão Duro, and back to Vaqueiros, the panoramic views unveil the territory in all its extent, marked by a high schist plateau located between the streams of Foupana and Odeleite, and cut by innumerable deep ravines. On the shady slopes grow forests of holm oak, cork oak and arbutus, alongside Mediterranean scrubs with cistus, poplar-leaved cistus, Montpellier cistus, broom, gorse, mastic and Spanish lavender. Partridges, hares, rabbits, wild boars and foxes, or their traces, can occasionally be observed.

# Uphill, downhill

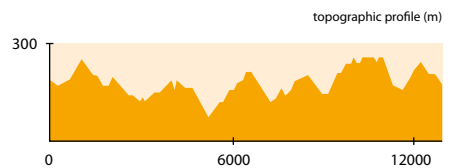


## 1 Start of the trail

$37^{\circ} 23' 01.61''$  N  $7^{\circ} 43' 37.41''$  W



 Trail



# Amendoeira Trail



Dominant landscape, with beds of cistus and sparse plots of stone pine

**Civil Parish:** Odeleite

**Municipality:** Castro Marim

**Location:** Alta Mora

**How to get there:** from Castro Marim, take the IC27 motorway until the exit to Azinhal and then the M512 to Sentinela, Corujos and Alta Mora.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 11,2 km

**Average duration:** 4h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 495 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** almond orchards, Ribeira do Beliche, mountain settlements, landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Castro Marim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Almond blossoms



Algarvian goat herd

The trail runs through a region of tall mountains of the northeast of the Algarve, with its typical *montes* (dispersed settlements) and the centuries-old dryland orchards, dominated by almond trees.

**A** – The Cerro de Alta Mora provides a magnificent view of the surrounding mountain ranges, punctuated by centuries-old holm oaks and almond trees which, during blooming season (January and February), cover the slopes in white.

Looking south, you can see the ocean, and the bridge of the Guadiana announces the mouth of the great southern river.

**B** – The ruins of the town of Caldeirão appear among dryland orchards, dominated by almond trees, alongside fig, carob trees and olive trees. Holm and cork oaks are surrounded by tall scrubland with cistus, poplar-leaved cistus, Spanish lavender, broom and rosemary.

**C** – Funchosa-de-Cima and Funchosa-de-Baixo are typical *montes* of the Algarve's hinterland: it is worth paying attention to their rural architecture, the vestiges of cattle-

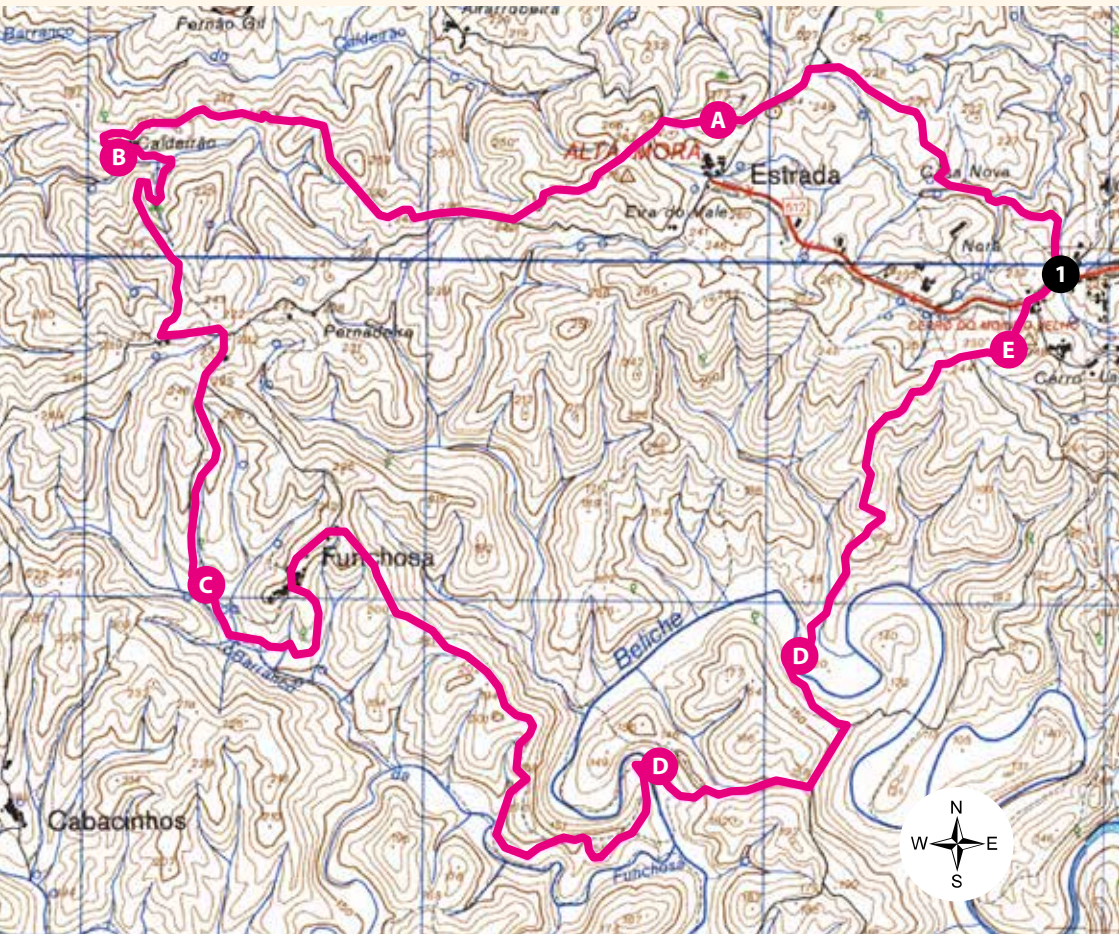
raising and subsistence vegetable gardens in the wetlands of Barranco da Funchosa, where grapevines, citrus fruits, fig and oleander trees abound.

**D** – On your way to ford the Ribeira do Beliche, the almond trees, when in bloom, cover the slopes and the road in white, and you can see local birds such as the Sardinian warbler, Thekla's lark or the corn bunting. At the Ribeira, although reed beds dominate the landscape, there are still parts of the native riverside vegetation: oleanders, tamarisk and the aromatic European pennyroyal and Hart's pennyroyal. With a bit of attention, you can discover species like the water snake and the common tortoise.

**E** – Back to Alta Mora, the view stretches along the Beliche valley and surrounding hills. The landscape presents a mosaic of stone pine plantations, holm oak groves, dryland orchards, beds of lavender and gorse, and patches of cistus. It is possible to come across flocks of Algarvian goat or species of wildlife crossing your path, especially hares, rabbits and partridges.

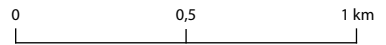


# Amendoeira Trail

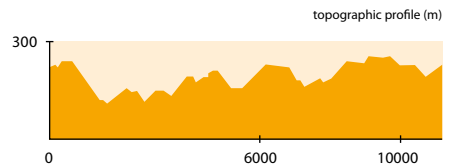


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 18' 21.66" N 7° 35' 33.21" W



 Trail



# Caminhos da Fonte



Crop fields and strawberry tree orchards near Fonte Azambujo

**Civil Parish:** Pereiro

**Municipality:** Alcoutim

**Location:** Pereiro

**How to get there:** from the A22 (Via do Infante), take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; from the IC27, take the exit to Pereiro by EN124.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 10 km

**Average duration:** 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 260 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** village of Pereiro and Casa do Ferreiro, rural landscape of northeast Algarve, rural hills and hydraulic heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Castro Marim Municipal Council.

**Remarks:** due to the risk of collapsing roofs and walls, avoid entering buildings in abandoned *montes*. The trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Iberian pear (pereira-brava, *Pyrus bourgaeana*). A typical species of the Mediterranean woodland which might have been the origin of the name of the village of Pereiro



Passage through the *Silveira monte*

The trail begins in Pereiro, a typical village in northeast Algarve, and traverses old paths among the rural hills of the region. It passes along facilities and infrastructure linked to water management, a scarce resource around these parts.

**A** – In Pereiro, visit the *Casa do Ferreiro*, a museum dedicated to the ancient art of blacksmithing. It presents a collection related to the craft, and shows a documentary which revives the memories linked to the art of iron and fire. Just outside the village, there is a well with a hydraulic pump with a vertical handle.

**B** – The landscape is rolling and wide, consisting of holm oak groves, pastures and stone pine plantations punctuated by old windmills in the high hills. A monumental holm oak marks the extreme south of the Pereiro irrigation dam, where, even during dry season, the rushes and cattails/cattails and the croaking of frogs reveal small hidden ponds.

**C** – Arriving at the Fonte do Zambujo de Cima, you'll be able to appreciate the elegant lines of the small village's rural architecture; the fountain consists of a manual hydraulic well with a wheel. You'll cross a small valley, fertile ground for partridges, wild rabbits and hares.

**D** – In Fonte Zambujo and Fonte Zambujo de Baixo, you can see the mosaic of terraced fields, pastures and orchards. There are arbutus, almond, fig and olive trees and small vineyards aplenty. This is a good place in which to spot the Eurasian hoopoe and the azure-winged magpie.

**E** – *Silveira*, an old farmer's estate (*monte*), was once an important place in the parish of Pereiro, with seven houses and about seventeen inhabitants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this typical *monte* of the Baixo Guadiana, uninhabited for a few decades now, you'll feel as if the clock were turning backwards.

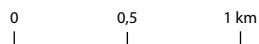
**F** – Back to Pereiro, a small detour will allow you to reach the reservoir of the irrigation dam. In the water you can observe birds like the grey heron, the little egret, the mallard or the water hen. This is also the habitat of the Mediterranean tortoise and, with a little bit of focus, it is possible to observe some of these reptiles appear in the surface of the water.

# Caminhos da Fonte



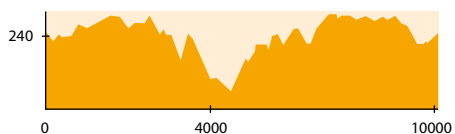
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 26' 49.83" N 7° 35' 38.99" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



## Boa Vista Trail



View towards the sea from the Cerro da Boa Vista

**Civil Parish:** Vila Nova de Cacela

**Municipality:** Vila Real de Santo António

**Location:** Corte António Martins

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante) motorway, take the exit for Altura / Monte Gordo; on the EN125, until you reach Vila Nova de Cacela, then take the EM509 to Corte António Martins.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 10 km

**Average duration:** 3h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 260 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** Cerro da Boa Vista, landscape, typical settlements of the Baixo Guadiana hinterlands, Mediterranean vegetation and associated wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Vila Real de Santo António Municipal Council.

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. You can opt for an alternative path to shorten the trail, between Pomar and the crossing of the Rio Seco on the east section of the trail.



Bread oven in the village of Corte António Martins



### Monumental holm oak

Starting from Corte António Martins, the trail follows rural roads and will let you visit settlements in the Baixo Guadiana region and privileged landscapes on the coastline.

**A** – The trail crosses through Corte António Martins, a village of houses scattered among vineyards, vegetable gardens and dryland orchards with holm oaks, carob and almond trees. Despite the modernity of the buildings, there are vestiges of the old rurality of the region, such as the typical schist kilns.

**B** – The vegetation is denser in the ravine of Rio Seco, and it is composed mainly of oleander, reeds and cattails, and large cork oaks. Mediterranean scrubland grows on the slopes, mainly gorse, Montpellier cistus and cistus, lavender and mastic thyme. Mammals such as the wild rabbit and the hare are common in the area, as are birds like the Eurasian jay, the hoopoe or the azure-winged magpie, among many others.

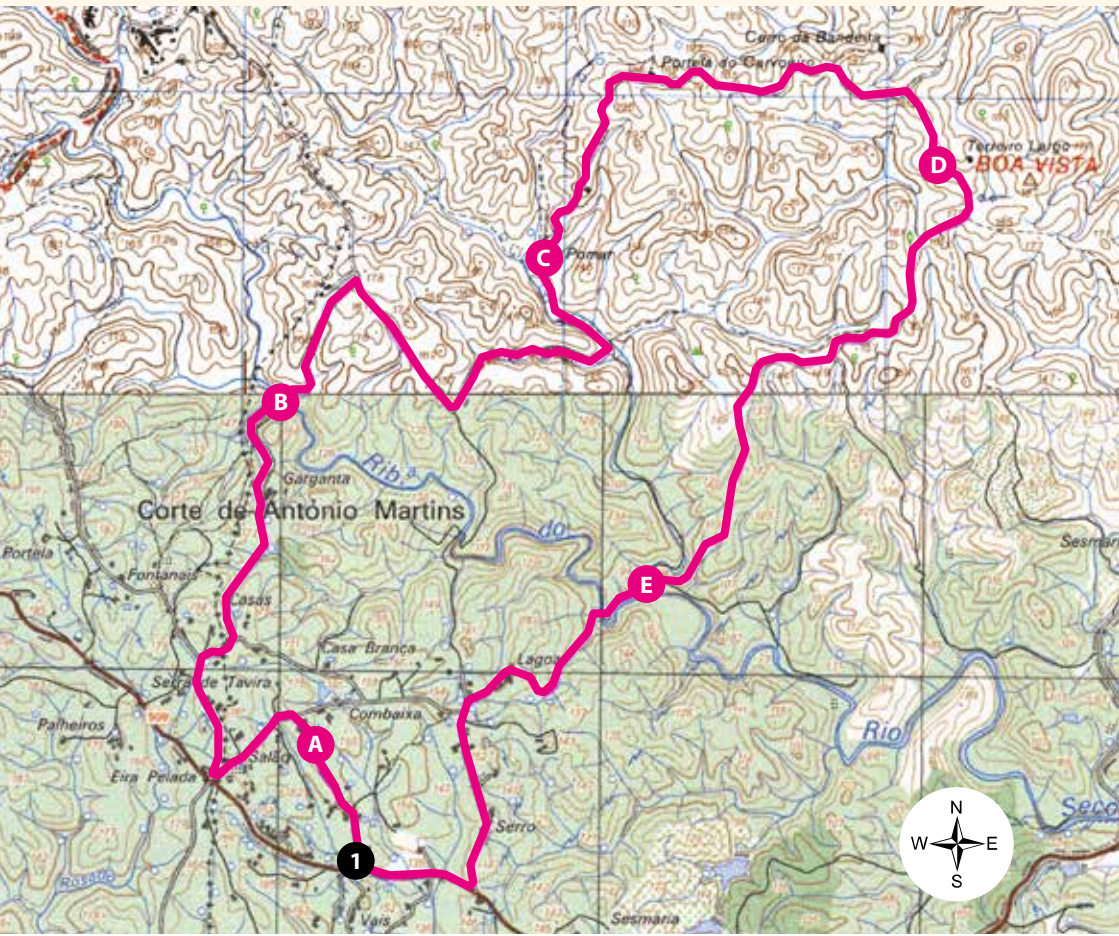
**C** – In Pomar, the trail follows a stream along whose wetlands grow vineyards, flanked by monumental holm oaks, carob and olive trees. This small village presents several examples of the Baixo Guadiana's traditional rural architecture: walls and dry stone walls in schist, roofs of straw and Portuguese tile, haysheds, cattle sheds, ovens, stone benches and wells.

**D** – The ascent to the hill of Boa Vista (literally "good view") does the trail's name justice. For about 3 km of road, the view extends through hills dominated by pine and beds of cistus and, to the south, over the ocean and the coast line, from the bar of Cacela-a-Velha to Isla Canela, in Spain.

**E** – A new crossing of the Rio Seco and its tributary will show you areas of well-preserved riverside curtain, with willows, oleanders, beds of reeds and cattails. At Rio Seco's ford, you will come across an impressive escarpment of schists and greywackes.

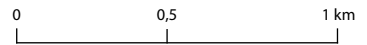


# Boa Vista Trail

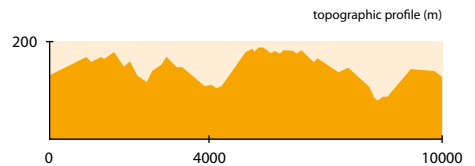


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 13' 16.03" N 7° 33' 46.98" W



 Trail



# Beliche Circuit



Beliche Dam

**Civil Parish:** Azinhal

**Municipality:** Castro Marim

**Location:** Barragem do Beliche

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante) motorway, take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; take the EN122 to Junqueira, and from there follow towards the Albufeira do Beliche dam.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 6,2 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 180 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Points of interest:** Albufeira do Beliche, hydraulic heritage of the Baixo Guadiana, Mediterranean vegetation and associated wildlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Castro Marim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Stone pine plantation



Houses and noria of an old agricultural estate

Beginning at the crown of the Albufeira do Beliche, the trail runs along the hills to the north of the water courses and through the Ribeira do Beliche wetlands, allowing you to get acquainted with the water mills responsible for water management.

**A** – From the dam of Albufeira do Beliche, the view stretches across the large body of water flanked by stone pines. This is an embankment dam located on the Beliche river, with a reservoir with a capacity of 48 hm<sup>3</sup>, and is part of the Odeleite-Beliche Hydraulic Infrastructure, meant to supply the populations and the irrigation system of southeast Algarve.

**B** – In the mountain ranges to the north grow typical Mediterranean scrubs, especially gorse and aromatic plants ones such as cistus, lavender, thyme and rosemary. Stone pines dominate the landscape, accompanied by carob and olive trees. Climbing down to the village of Cerro de Santo António, you can get a glimpse of the wetlands of Ribeira do Beliche.

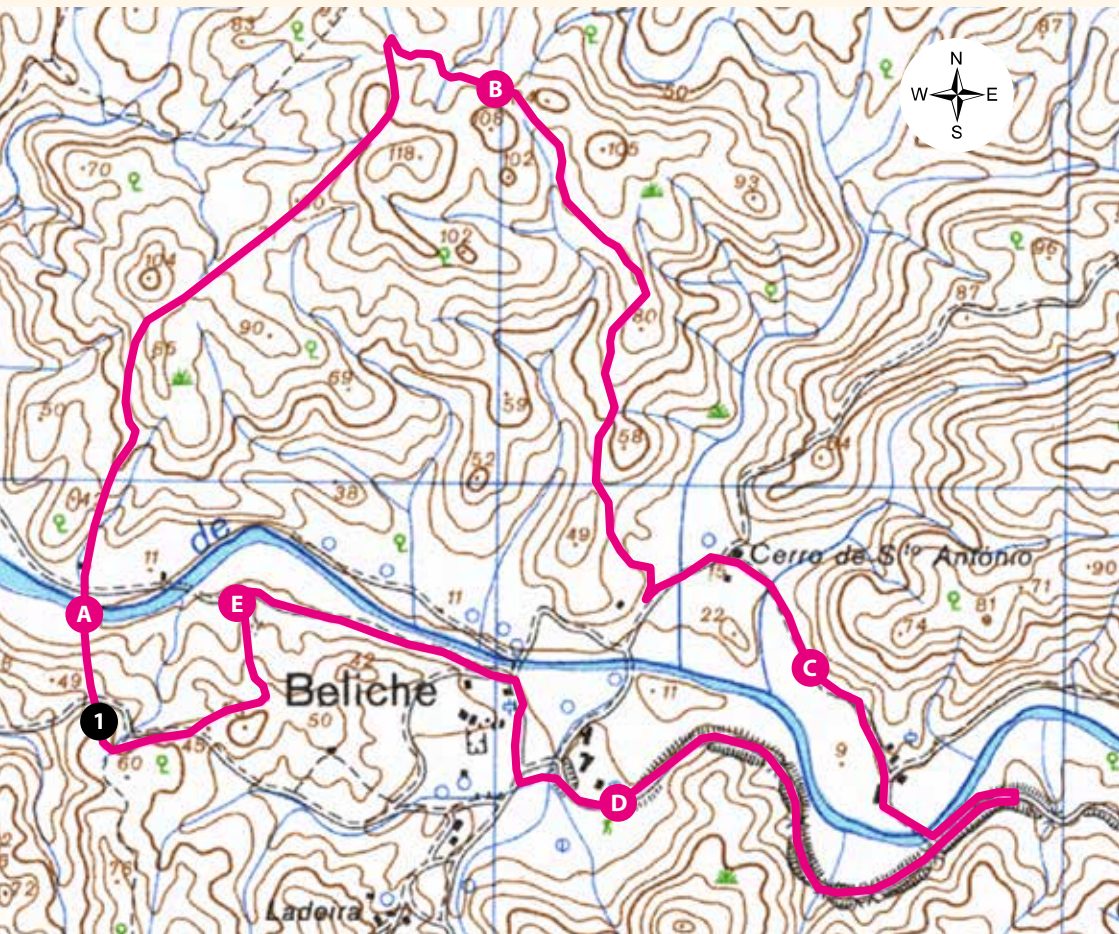
**C** – Horta do Vinagre is a small village hidden

among the verdant mosaic of wetlands crops. The dense riverside curtain displays tamarisks, poplars, brambles and reed beds; there are citrus and dryland orchards, with fig, almond and olive trees; cabbages, grapevines, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, green beans and corn grow in the vegetable gardens, framed by peach, pear and oleander trees. Here and there, you can see thick cork oaks.

**D** – At the entrance of the village of Beliche, there is a waterwheel in an old agricultural property, with a well and a tank for water storage. The device preserves its mechanism and its respective buckets. Once upon a time, a hinny, a mule, or a cow, would ride in circles around the well, moving the wheel and filling the buckets with the water then travelled through a leat to the tank.

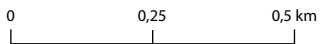
**E** – Among citrus orchards, there is the ETA (Water Treatment Station), part of the Odeleite / Beliche hydraulic system. The station is prepared to serve more than 500,000 inhabitants, corresponding to about 44,000,000 m<sup>3</sup> /year of water.

# Circuito do Beliche

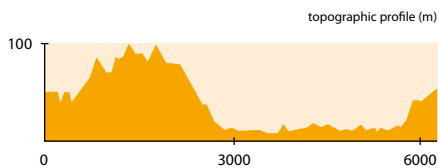


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 16' 27.82" N 7° 30' 32.92" W



 Trail



# Ladeiras do Pontal



Trail near Torneiro, among holm oak groves and stone pine plantations

**Civil Parish:** Alcoutim

**Municipality:** Alcoutim

**Location:** Miradouro do Pontal

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante), take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; Access through the IC27 or the EN122 motorways, by taking the exit to, respectively, Alcaria Alta or Foz de Odeleite. The EM1063, which runs along the Guadiana, you give you acces to the Pontal viewpoint.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 13,3 km

**Average duration:** 4h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 440 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on

very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is partially located in the Guadiana Natura 2000 Site. It shares stretches with the GR15 - Great Guadiana Trail and with the GR13 - Via Algarviana in Sector 1, and with one of its thematic trails – the Smuggler's Trail.

**Points of interest:** Miradouro do Pontal and landscapes, holm oaks and olive trees, Mediterranean woods, historical heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Alcoutim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.

Beginning in the Pontal, overlooking the river, the trail follows inland, along rural roads once used for smuggling goods.

**A** – Pontal rises over a curve of the Guadiana, from which you can see the castle of Sanlúcar to the north. The landscape is magnificent, and you'll enjoy the vegetation of the slopes that go down to the river, composed of exuberant holm oak woods and, on the bank, riparian galleries.

**B** – On the way to Torneiro, hills and valleys follow, one after the other, towards the horizon. They are covered by a mosaic of stone pines, cork oaks and Mediterranean scrub, mainly cistus and beds of Spanish lavender and gorse. The proximity to pluvial streams, as in the Barranco das Fontainhas, allows for the diversification of vegetation, and riverside galleries with oleander, tamarisk, willow and brambles.

**C** – The path meanders halfway up the slopes of hills where terraces with holm oaks and pastures descend towards deep ravines. Near the settlements grow almond, olive, carob and fig trees, typical of dryland

orchards. Between paths and dirt tracks, you can see or detect traces of species of game such as wild rabbits, hares, wild boars and partridges.

**D** – The way back to the river is part of the Smugglers' Trail. From time immemorial, poverty has led the region's inhabitants to dedicate themselves to the illegal trade of goods, although crossing the border involved crossing the river by boat, or to swim. A tight network of Fiscal Guard stations ran along the length of the river. In small villages, guards and smugglers lived side by side, and there was a "diplomatic understanding" among men pursuing opposing goals.

**E** – The trail that runs along the curve of the river crosses the centennial olive grove of Pontal, one of the most productive in the municipality. Many birds, especially passerines, can be seen in the fields - robins, chiffchaffs, starlings, thrushes, blackbirds, among others. A former post of the Fiscal Guard stands on higher ground.

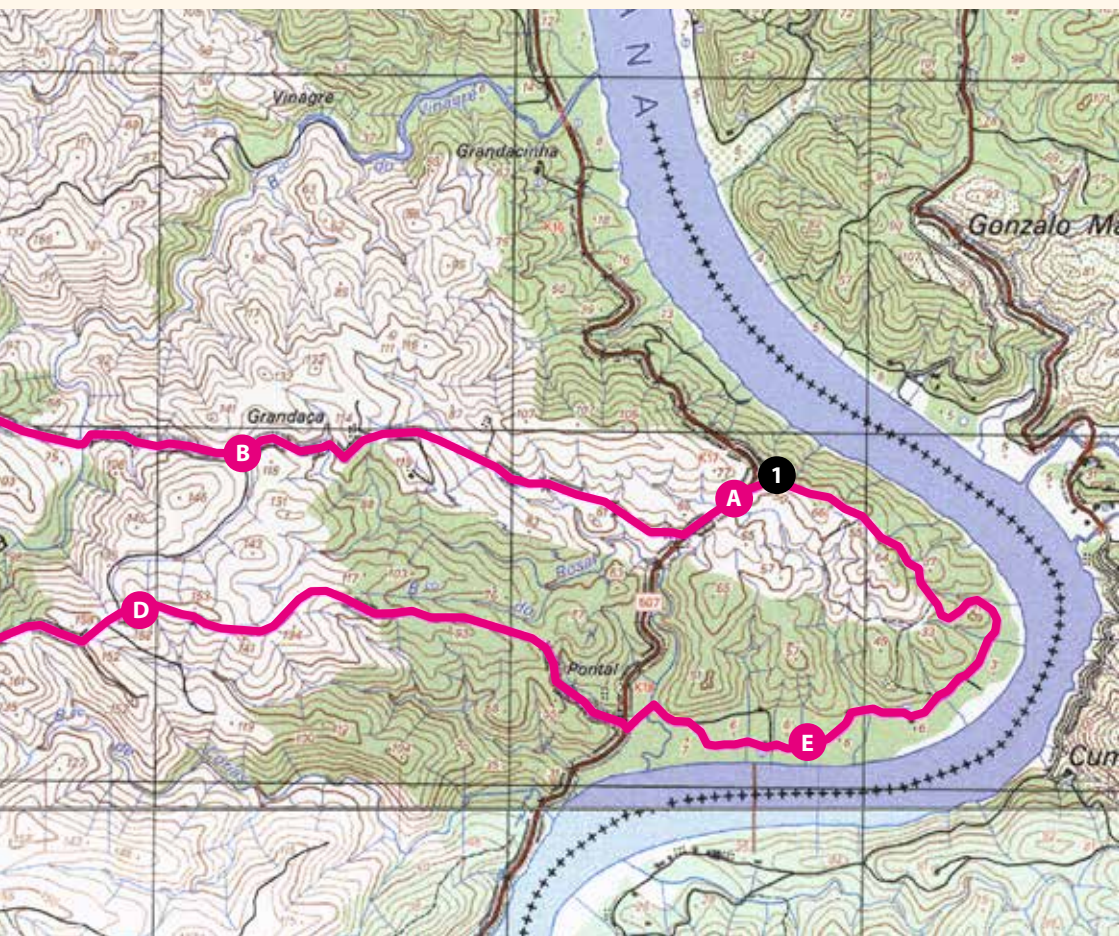


Holm oak acorns (*Quercus rotundifolia*)



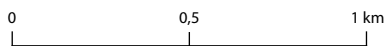


# Ladeiras do Pontal

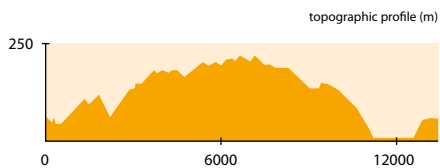


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 25' 21.59" N 7° 27' 17.59" W



 Trail



## Terras da Ordem Trail



Confluence of the Foupana and Odeleite streams

**Civil Parish:** Odeleite

**Municipality:** Castro Marim

**Location:** Terras da Ordem National Forest

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante) motorway, take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; access through the EN122 or the IC17 to Odeleite. Follow along the EN122 for about 3 km north of Odeleite, you'll find the Forest Ranger's house.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 12 km

**Average duration:** 4h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 380 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is partially located in the Guadiana Natura 2000 Site, and close to the GR15 - Great Guadiana Trail.

**Points of interest:** Terras da Ordem National Forest, Ribeira de Odeleite, riverside vegetation and associated wildlife, hydraulic heritage.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Castro Marim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve. An alternative section connects the trail to the village of Odeleite.



Fire lookout tower in the National Forest



### Moinho das Pernadas

The trail crosses through the Terras da Ordem National Forest, accompanying sections of the Odeleite and Foupana rivers and allowing you to visit villages such as Odeleite, Pernadas and Tenência.

**A** – The Ranger's house, which includes several forest management facilities and a nearby watchtower, marks the beginning of the trail. The Terras da Ordem were owned by religious orders until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They display the native forests of holm oak, olive and carob trees.

**B** – The groves of stone pine and Aleppo pine (a rustic pine tree from the Mediterranean basin) were planted only from the 1970s onwards. The sowing of new trees and placement of water dispensers in this area is intended to help wildlife thrive.

**C** – The trail follows the final stretch of the Foupana, until it meets the Odeleite. The margins show dense reed beds and, more rarely, native vegetation with ash, tamarisk, and oleander trees; old olive groves grow in the wetlands, and native species of scrubland on the slopes - olive trees, holm oaks and carob trees.

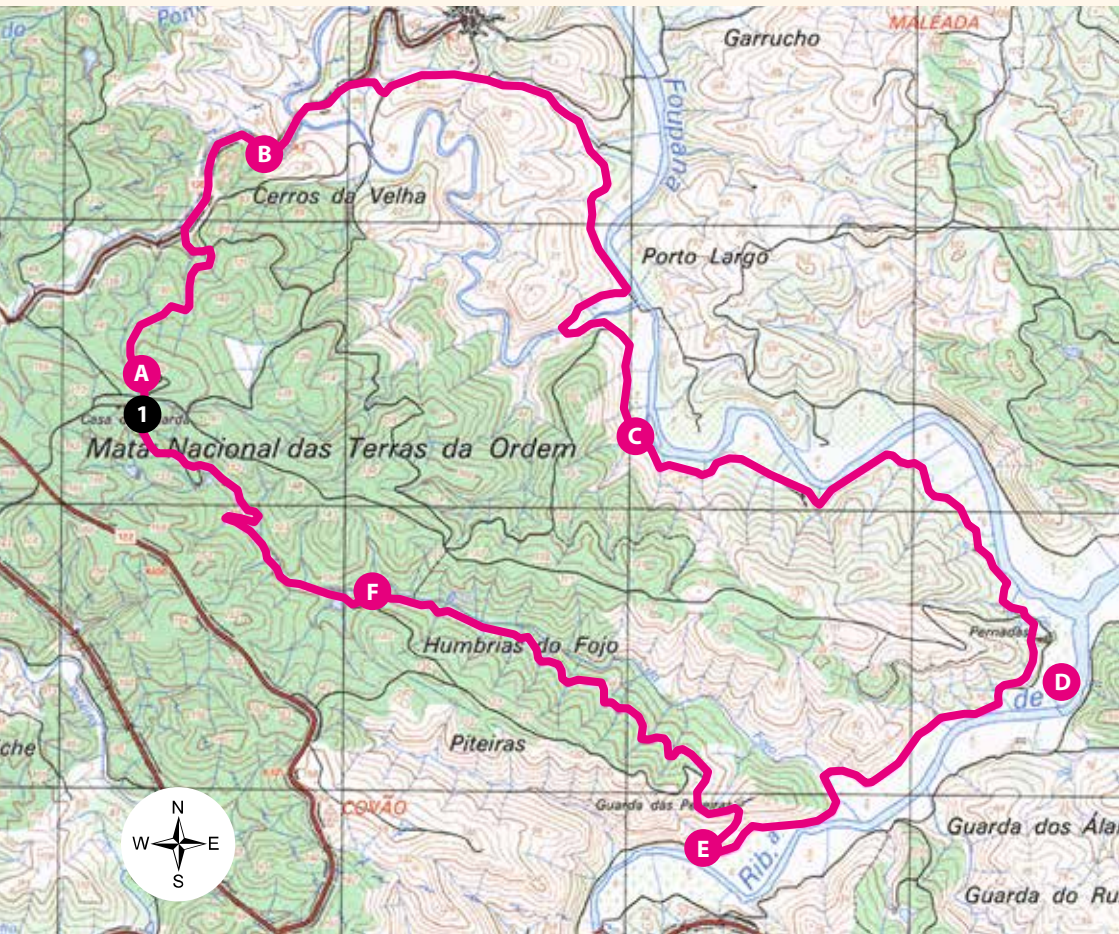
**D** – The Moinho das Pernadas, a recently restored windmill, was an important

nexus for cereals produced in the region of Odeleite, and vestiges of its silos are still visible. This whole riverside area has high ecological interest, from the riparian vegetation to birds such as the grey heron, the mallard, the water hen or the common kingfisher, among others. Reptiles and amphibians such as the ladder-snake, the Spanish psammodromus, the natterjack toad or the fire salamander have also been recorded.

**E** – Near the ruins of Guarda-Pereiros, the view extends over the village and river of Odeleite. The river meanders and its banks display all the shades of green, between the vegetation of the riverside curtain and the orchards and vegetable gardens of the wetlands.

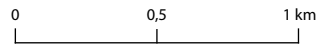
**F** – Back to the heart of the woods, you'll follow along the Barranco do Cavalo, surrounded by ash trees and oleander. There's an immense diversity of mammals: wild rabbits, foxes, gypsies and wild boars are common. You can spot or listen to birds such as the partridge, the turtledove, or typical passerines such as the Dartford warbler, the crested tit, the blue tit or the azure-winged magpie.

# Terras da Ordem Trail

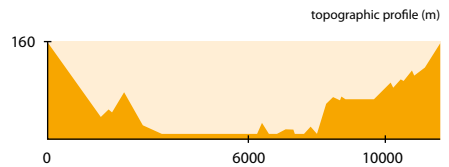


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 21' 19.81" N 7° 30' 22.92" W



 Trail



# The Charms of Alcoutim



The Guadiana seen from the ruins of the Old Castle

**Civil Parish:** Alcoutim

**Municipality:** Alcoutim

**Location:** Alcoutim

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante), take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; access through the EN 122 or the IC27, taking the exit to Alcoutim as you pass by Balurcos.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 4,6 km

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 166 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is partially located in the Guadiana Natura 2000 Site, and crosses the GR15 - Great Guadiana Trail with starts in Alcoutim. The GR13 - Via Algarviana also starts in Alcoutim, as does one of its thematic trails - The Smuggler's Trail.

**Points of interest:** iconic places of the border town (Old Castle and Castle of Alcoutim, among others), River Beach and Guadiana River; landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Alcoutim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** it is possible to cross the river and visit the Spanish village of Sanlúcar del Guadiana.



Pego Fundo river beach



Statue of the Smuggler, on the quay of Alcoutim

This trail takes you through the border city of Alcoutim. It will allow you to discover such iconic sites as the Castle of Alcoutim, the ruins of the Old Castle, the Praia Fluvial, and the landscapes of the River Guadiana.

**A** – The trail begins near the Casa dos Condes (currently the Municipal Library) and the Parish Church of São Salvador, guarded by 17<sup>th</sup> century walls. An alleyway leads to one of the quays on the river, where you'll find a statue of The Smuggler, inseparable from that of the Fiscal Guard, about 100 meters to the south.

**B** – High above Alcoutim and the river are the ruins of the Old Castle, from the Islamic Period. The castle was built in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, under the Umayyad dynasty, on the top of a rugged outcrop of schist and greywacke. It was a fortified palace, including a small mosque, built to exert military control over the river mine and extract minerals. The place affords a privileged view on the Guadiana and

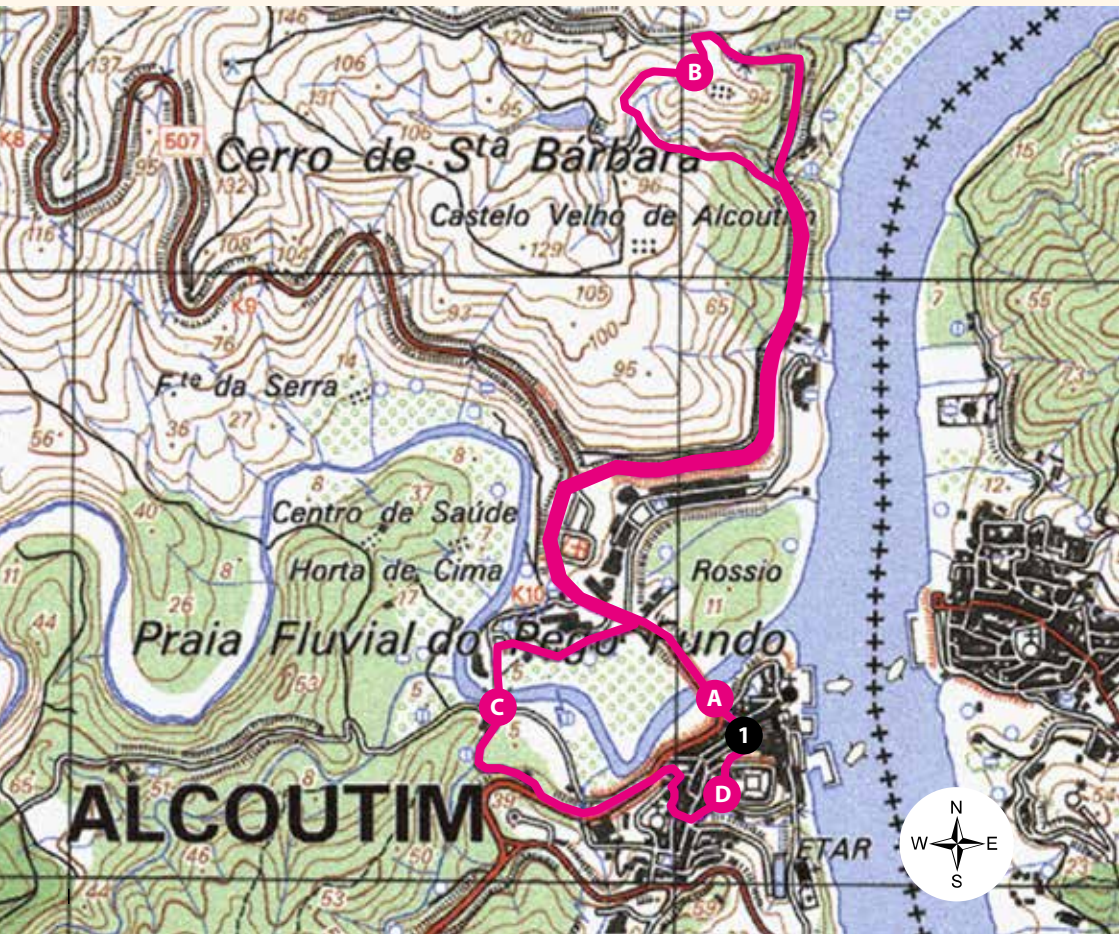
Spanish lands, chief among which the Castle of Sanlúcar del Guadiana.

**C** – The Praia Fluvial de Pego Fundo (Pego Fundo river beach) is inserted in the rural landscape of northeast Algarve, spread along a weir of Ribeira de Cadavais. The shore was created with coastal sands, clear and unusual around these parts. The beach is framed by a landscaped space with support facilities, fitness circuits and picnic park.

**D** – A hike along the waterfront leads back to the centre of Alcoutim; it passes by the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição (which houses the Sacred Art Museum) and the Poço Novo Street leads to the “new” Castle of Alcoutim. Inside the walls, the Archaeological Museum explores the region's historical roots, which go back over 5,000 years. In the old Arsenal, you can also see a collection of board games and their respective stone pieces, recovered from the ruins of the Old Castle.

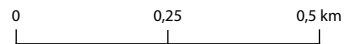


# The Charms of Alcoutim



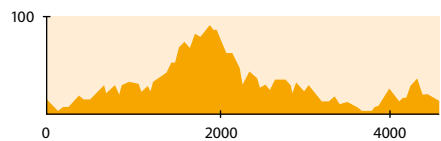
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 28' 16.63" N 7° 28' 18.74" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



## A Window to the Guadiana



Várzea das Almas

**Civil Parish:** Azinhal

**Municipality:** Castro Marim

**Location:** Azinhal

**How to get there:** from the A22 (Via do Infante) motorway, take the exit to Beja/Alcoutim; access to the village of Azinhal by the EN122.

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 7,4 km

**Average duration:** 2h30

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 225 metros D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths and asphalt roads.

**When to visit:** all year round, except on very hot days.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes

**Specific features:** the trail is close to the Guadiana Natura 2000 Site, and crosses the GR15 - Great Guadiana Trail.

**Points of interest:** typical village of the Baixo Guadiana (Azinhal), Mediterranean vegetation and associated wildlife, Guadiana River and river landscape.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Odiana - Associação Terras do Baixo Guadiana and Castro Marim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** the trail crosses a hunting reserve.



Slope covered by Mediterranean woodland



Goathearding in Azinhal

The trail begins in Azinhal, a typical village in the Baixo Guadiana, and runs along ridgelines until it reaches the Várzea das Almas, where it will afford you a privileged view of the Guadiana River, close to its mouth.

**A** – Touring the village of Azinhal, it is worth stopping for a look at the details of the traditional architecture of the region, to visit the museum and the Church of the Holy Spirit, and get to know local sweets and pastries, and handicrafts.

**B** – Leaving Azinhal towards the river, there is a windmill, still with its working mechanism, and the village's old communal well, between pastures, wetlands and dryland orchards of almond and carob trees.

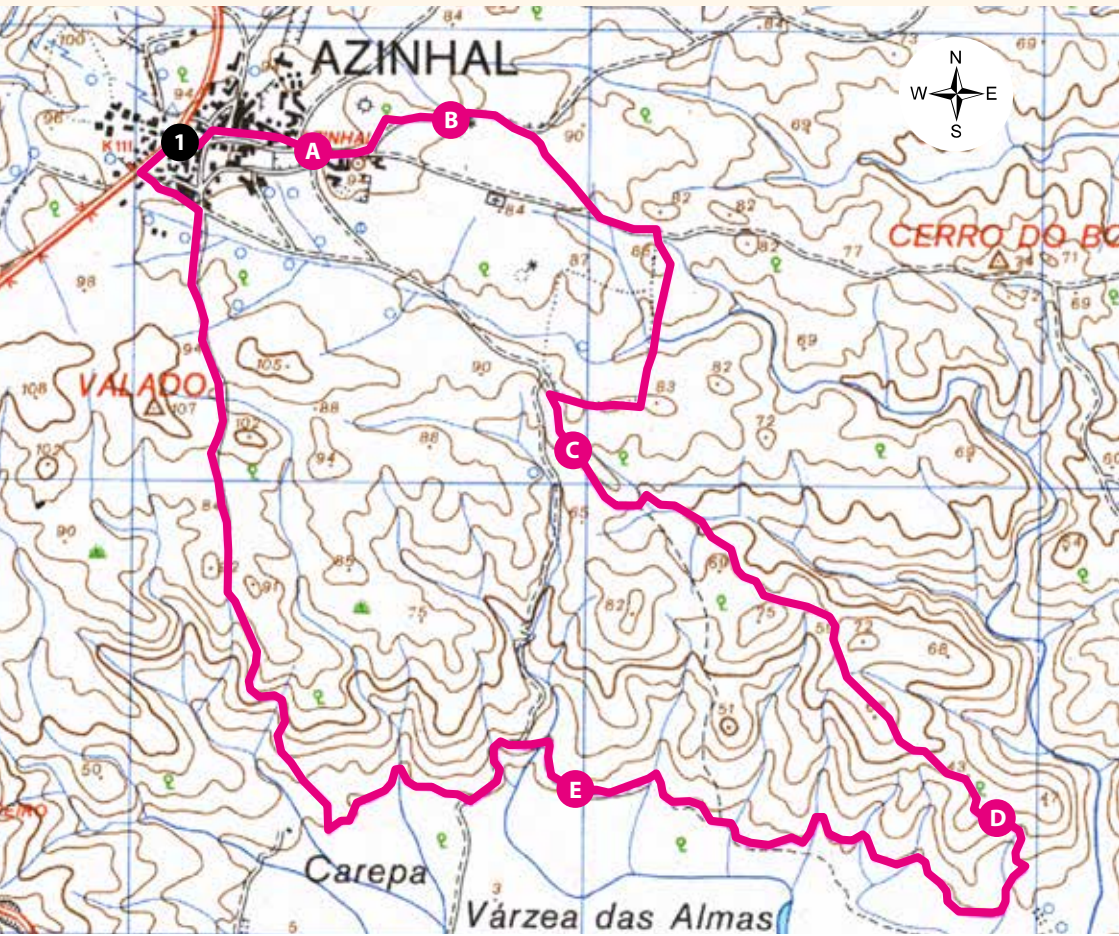
**C** – The surrounding hills are covered with cistus, gorse and lavender, from which imposing holm oaks, olive and carob trees emerge. An ancient sheepfold in schist evokes the region's agro-pastoral tradition. Both in the woods as well as the orchards,

there are species such as wild rabbits, hares and partridges, and birds such as the Dartford warbler, Thekla's lark, the dove, the golden oriole or the red-backed shrike.

**D** – A superb view opens over the Guadiana and Várzea das Almas, into which the Ribeira do Beliche flows. Along the riverbank, the salt marches take over the wide wetlands, and, looking south, you can see the bridge connecting Portugal and Spain, near the mouth of the Guadiana. Upstream, the riparian curtain becomes denser, dominated by ash, willow, tamarisk, brambles and reeds. The mosaic of wetlands is made up of pastures and cultivated fields.

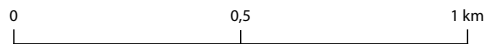
**E** – Back to the Azinhal, the trail follows along the middle of the slope, between holm groves and Mediterranean scrubland dominated by mastic trees. Small streams cut through the slopes, running down to the valley through narrow, rocky gullies, where the vegetation thickens.

# A Window to the Guadiana

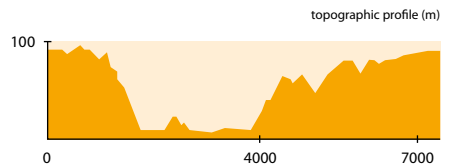


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 17' 04.21" N 7° 27' 58.08" W



 Trail



# Venta Moinhos Salt Marsh Trail



Cows and cattle egrets in the middle of a carob orchard

**Civil Parish:** Castro Marim

**Municipality:** Castro Marim

**Location:** Salt Marsh Nature Reserve of Castro Marim and Vila Real St.º António

**How to get there:** on the A22 (Via do Infante), take the exit to Alcoutim Alcoutim; after taking the EN 122 to Castro Marim-Beja, turn right at the intersection in Monte Francisco, towards "Reserva Natural".

**Type:** walking and cycling

**Circular trail:** no

**Distance:** 7 km (there and back)

**Average duration:** 2h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 50 metres D+

**Type of path:** dirt paths

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** no

**Signposted:** no

**Specific features:** the trail is located in the Ria Formosa / Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site and the Salt Marsh Nature Reserve of Castro Marim and Vila Real St.º António (RNSCMVRSA). An informative pamphlet about the trail is available at the RNSCMVRSA Interpretation Centre. You can park your car in the Interpretation Centre's car park.

**Points of interest:** salt marsh, traditional salt ponds and dryland orchards; landscape and birdlife.

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** Salt Marsh Nature Reserve of Castro Marim and Vila Real St.º António (RNSCMVRSA) and Castro Marim Municipal Council

**Remarks:** there are other pedestrian and mountain biking trails within the area of the RNSCMVRSA.



Bird watchers



Interpretation and Information Centre of the Nature Reserve

This trail coincides with the access path to the Interpretation and Information Centre of the Nature Reserve and to the north of it, towards the former Fiscal Guard building. A small part of the trail is interpreted and runs south of the Centre, allowing you to see the wetland habitats: salt marshes, salt ponds, permanent and temporary ponds.

**A** – The path separates the dryland fields to the north (mainly carob and sparse patches of olives tree with an undergrowth of rye) from the wetland to the south, with its salt marsh habitats, the traditional salt ponds and the wide tidal creek which channels the waters of the tide.

**B** – The Interpretation Centre is framed by pines and broom, characteristic vegetation of southeast Algarve's coastline. In the Centre you can see exhibits and get information or acquire publications about the Reserve. Inside the building there are good sites for observing the marshes.

**C** – Climbing to the Casa Abrigo immediately south of the Centre, the horizon opens over the complex of salt ponds, the mouth of the Guadiana, and the salt habitats. It is usually possible to observe a large number of aquatic birds, especially in the winter or during migration, such as the black-winged stilt (the symbol of the Reserve), the spoonbill, the flamingo, the white stork, the pied avocet, or the little tern. The records point to the regular annual occurrence of around 170 species of bird.

**D** – The path towards the old Fiscal Guard building, which overlooks the river drawing the border with Spain, crosses pastures for bovine cattle and goats and temporary lakes hidden among the beds of rush and bulrush of these brackish grounds. Next to the house you reach the river bank; the estuary of the Guadiana and Castro Marim's salt marsh are important shelters and breeding sites for aquatic birds and for various species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans.

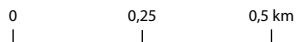


# Venta Moinhos Salt Marsh Trail



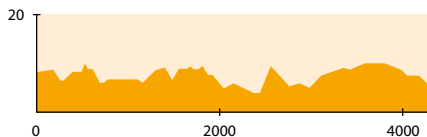
## 1 Start of the trail

37° 14' 04.51" N 7° 26' 49.44" W



 Trail

topographic profile (m)



# Passeio Pombalino



Vila Real de Santo António's waterfront

**Civil Parish:** Vila Real de Santo António

**Municipality:** Vila Real de Santo António

**Location:** Vila Real de Santo António

**How to get there:** from Faro: take the EN125 motorway to Vila Real de Santo António (VRSA), or the A22 (Via do Infante) as far as the exit to Castro Marim, then head south, towards VRSA.

**Type:** walking

**Circular trail:** yes

**Distance:** 2 km

**Average duration:** 1h

**Cumulative elevation gain:** 25 metres D+

**Type of path:** paved streets

**When to visit:** all year round

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** no

**Specific features:** an informative pamphlet about the trail is available at the tourist offices and VRSA City Hall.

**Points of interest:** built heritage

**Owners:** public paths

**Responsible Party:** VRSA Municipal Council



Marquês de Pombal Square



Casa dos Folques

The Passeio Pombalino runs through the historic centre of the VRSA and reveals the geometric layout of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of the Marquis of Pombal. A symbol of Pombaline urbanism, the city is characterised by simplicity and regularity, having been built from scratch after the 1755 earthquake.

**A** – The Marquês de Pombal Square is the heart of the city, a royal square in the centre of which the *Obelisk*, symbol of royal power, was erected in 1776. The square is framed by the buildings of the City Hall, the Guard Corps, the Parish Church and the other two-storey buildings, with four small tower-like buildings, one in each corner.

**B** – Walking towards the river, you will reach Baixa-Mar, a waterfront to the Guadiana. Meanwhile, in Avenida da República, stands the Casa dos Folques, formerly owned by the Ramirez family, pioneers of the canning industry.

**C** – Crossing the avenue toward the archway of the old Customs House, you'll walk along the promenade towards the mouth of the

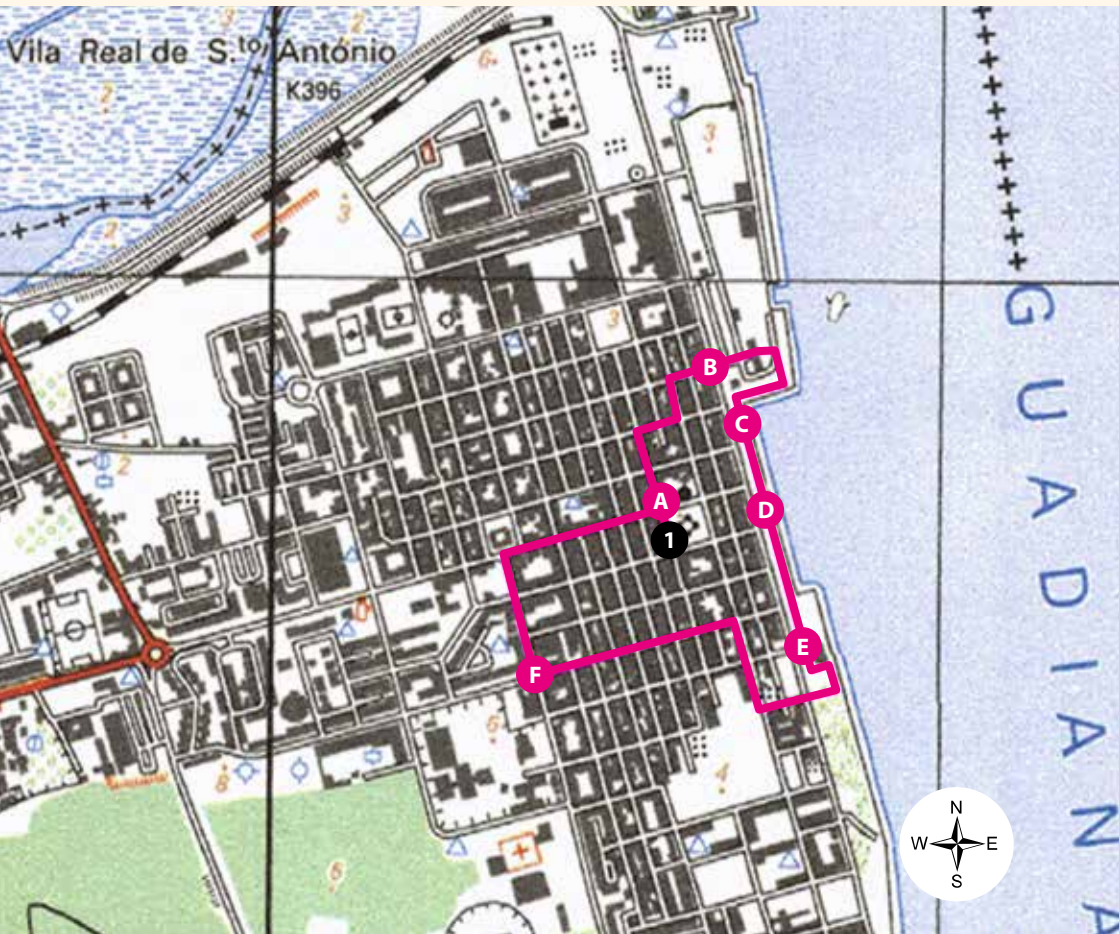
river. On the other side of the river is Spain, and the façades along the avenue are the visible face of the city, the most ostensible urban space, with their two stories and French windows.

**D** – The Hotel Guadiana, classified as a property of public interest, was designed by the Swiss architect Ernesto Korrodi at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building, whose eclectic style breaks with Pombaline lines, is today considered an expression of modernity in the context of the VRSA's historical urban evolution.

**E** – The twelve units which used to be part of the Fishing Societies align symmetrically along the avenue. They accumulated industrial and residential functions, with a two-storey pavilion facing the river and a U-shaped shed at the back, where fish was processed.

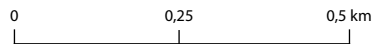
**F** – Casa Parodi, the former house and factory of a family of canning pioneers, now hosts the Regional Conservatory. Looking south, as you cross through the grid of streets, you can see the city's Lighthouse.

# Passeio Pombalino

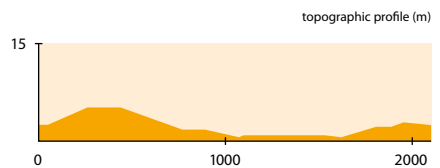


## 1 Start of the trail

37° 11' 40.36" N 7° 24' 56.91" W



 Trail







## 6. Great Trails

# Great Trails Map



## Map key


 Rota Vicentina  **ROTA VICENTINA**  
TWO STEPS TO FREEDOM. SW PORTUGAL

 Via Algarviana  
 Connections to Via Algarviana  *viaalgarviana*





— Descoberta Trail
 

— Great Route of the Guadiana
 

● Natura 2000 Site

# Via Algarviana



Funcho Dam

The Via Algarviana is a Great Pedestrian Route (GR13), approximately 300 km long, for both hikers and MTB cyclists. This trail, which starts in Alcoutim and ends at Cape St. Vincent – it can also be done in the opposite direction – crosses the whole countryside of the Algarve, from the Barrocal to the Serra, passing through villages and hamlets where many of the region's customs and cultural traditions endure. The route is divided into 14 sections, taking into account the nature of the terrain and logistic requirements, such as lodging or meals. The stretches aren't fixed and unchangeable and can be done separately, depending on each individual's physical ability. The Via Algarviana has comprehensive signage to help users

– marker posts, directional arrows and signposts, information boards and colours marking places of interest or cultural and natural heritage, support facilities, the way to go or the general direction of the trail. The trail goes through 9 municipalities, and as you follow it you'll be able to see five Natura 2000 Sites, two Classified Sites and one Natural Park, all clearly identified. Several threatened animal and plant species inhabit these locations – Bonelli's eagle, the Eurasian Eagle Owl, the otter, the wildcat, orchids and narcissi. There is also an important community of native flora, including endemic species such as *Bellevalia hackelii*, *Linaria algarviana* and *Thymus camphoratus*, among others. Several aromatic or medicinal plants, such as



thyme, Spanish lavender, fennel, rosemary, etc., can be found along the route. The natural vegetation is mainly Mediterranean, with dense cork oak forests amid a cistus undergrowth; there are also strawberry trees, dryland and citrus orchards, pine woods, and others.

The route crosses a number of streams and rivers with abundant riverine vegetation, as well as hilltops and viewpoints, and places of particular geological interest such as Silves with its *grês-de-silves* (Silves sandstone), Monchique with its subvolcanic eruptive syenite massif and the Barrocal with its Jurassic limestones.

The Via Algarviana is a trail rich in historical, archaeological and religious heritage, where many of the cultural values of the Algarve's



Cistus bed near Silves



View from the Monchique range's northern slope

interior still thrive — from centuries-old churches, fountains, hermitages, scoopwheels and waterwheels, windmills, menhirs, museums and communal ovens, to traditional and handicraft fairs and markets, and popular and religious festivals that take place throughout the year. You can also see crafts made with different local products such as wool, linen, cotton, cane, wicker, pottery, strawberry tree fruit, honey, among many others. All of these make this a never-to-be-forgotten route.

The Via Algarviana has 7 available connections or derivations to Aljezur, Parises, Ameixial, Albufeira and to the train stations of Loulé, Mexilhoeira Grande and Lagos as well as 12 small routes, that intercept or share paths with the main axis.

There are also 4 thematic routes: the Smuggler's Trail in Alcoutim, the Water Trail



Rosa-albardeira (*Paeonia broteri*)

in Loulé, and the Monumental Trees Trail and the Geology Trail in Monchique. Also associated with the project are 12 small route, complementary pedestrian trails that intercept or share paths with the main axis or derivations of the Via Algarviana.



Algarvian goat herd in Furnazinhas

**Name of Route:** Via Algarviana (GR13)

**Municipalities covered:** Alcoutim, Castro Marim, Tavira, São Brás de Alportel, Loulé, Silves, Monchique, Lagos and Vila do Bispo.

**Location:** Algarve Region

**How to get there and start/finish**

**points:** the route is divided into 14 sections, each starting and finishing at places with appropriate accommodation services. Get there via the EN roads to these places: Alcoutim, Balurcos, Furnazinhas, Vaqueiros, Cachopo, Barranco do Velho, Salir, Alte, São Bartolomeu de Messines, Silves, Monchique, Marmeleite, Bensafrim, Vila do Bispo and Sagres – Cape St. Vincent.

**Type of trail:** linear Great Route (GR), for hikers and MTB cyclists

**Distance:** 300 Km

**Average duration:** one section per day (14 sections with distances between 14,3 km and 30,19 km, corresponding to 4-8 hours of walking per day)

**Recommended season:** spring and autumn

**Approved:** under consideration

**Signposted:** yes

**Responsible party:** Almargem – Associação de Defesa do Património Cultural e Ambiental do Algarve

**Remarks:** additional information at [viaalgarviana.org](http://viaalgarviana.org), where, in addition to news and a variety of information, you can download a guide for the entire trail and a GPS file.

# Rota Vicentina



Rural path, near Bordeira

The Rota Vicentina is a great route between Santiago do Cacém and Cape St. Vincent, with around 450 km of marked paths. It encompasses the Historical Path, the Fishermen's Trail and various Circular Trails. The Historical Path (trail integrated in the GR 11 E9) is about 230 km long and can be done hiking or cycling. It connects Santiago do Cacém to Cape St. Vincent. This Great

Trail aims to recover what would have been the route taken by pilgrims, travellers and locals across the region, as it crosses many towns and villages.

The Fishermen's Trail goes from Porto Covo to Cape St. Vincent. Until the spring of 2019 it is expected to be extended to Lagos, in the Algarve. Nowadays the Fishermen's Trail is located solely in the Southwest



Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park. This natural Park is considerably diverse in natural and semi-natural landscapes. It extends 2 km into the sea, and as a result it has sandy and pebble beaches, cliffs along the shoreline and a coastal plateau broken only by the odd ravine. The coastal landscapes sustain a considerable diversity of rare floral

populations and endemic species. Out of the about 700 species of plants, 100 are endemic, rare or local. The most common trees of this region are oak species like the cork oak and the Portuguese oak. The strawberry tree, a shrub or small tree which usually grows near these oaks, is also particularly important.

Some of the watercourses in the park sustain endemic species of fish and serve as staging points for passerines. Their estuaries provide ideal conditions for juvenile marine fish and are important staging and feeding points for migrating birds. Every year between the end of summer and beginning of autumn, in the far southwest near Sagres and Cape St. Vincent, a great variety of birds gather during their migration to Africa. During these days you can spot a great number of eagles, kites, vultures, storks, and other species, as they wait for favourable winds to carry them on their journey south.

Human activity in the region is mainly concerned with agriculture, livestock, fishing and tourism. The agricultural fields grow traditional crops using traditional methods, with the exception of a growing area in the Perímetro de Rega do Mira, which uses intensive farming. The cultural heritage is also quite diversified. The Sagres Fortress is particularly noteworthy, due to its almost mythical connotation with the History of the Portuguese Discoveries.



Arrival at Cape St. Vincent





Aljezur riverlands

**Name of the trail:** Rota Vicentina – Historical Path (GR11)

**Municipalities:** Santiago do Cacém, Sines, Odemira, Aljezur, Vila do Bispo

**Location:** Alentejo and Algarve

**How to get there and start/end points:**

each of the 12 stages begins and ends in places accessible by the main roads (Santiago do Cacém, Vale Seco, Cercal do Alentejo, Porto Covo, S. Luís, Odemira, São Teotónio, Odeceixe, Aljezur, Arrifana, Carrapateira, Vila do Bispo, Cape St. Vincent).

**Type of Trail:** linear trail integrated in the Great Route 11 (GR 11 E9), connecting Sagres to St Petersburg (Russia).

**Distance:** 230 km

**Average duration:** a sector per day (12 sectors with distances between 12 km and 25 km).

**When to visit:** all year round except summer or very hot days, usually between July and August.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes, with intuitive signage so you can hike in both directions.

**Responsible Party:** Rota Vicentina - Associação para a Promoção do Turismo de Natureza na Costa Alentejana e Vicentina.

**Remarks:** more information on the [pt.rotavicentina.com](http://pt.rotavicentina.com) webpage, including news, download links to maps and brochures of the trails, as well as GPS files.

# Great Route of the Guadiana

The 65 km long Great Route of the Guadiana (GR15) connects Alcoutim to Vila Real de Santo António. The trail goes through the Algarve's rolling hills, as well as parts of the Barrocal and coastline areas. It moves through the Baixo Guadiana territory, crossing some of its villages and ancient paths. This great route can be completed through a network of 19 small-route trails, with distances between 3 km and 15 km. The "Guadiana Trails" encompass about 135 km and allow you to visit the whole region in detail.

This GR's cultural landscape is very interesting, due to the region's traditional activities. These activities are heavily linked to the Guadiana itself, namely its navigation and small-scale fishing. This route crosses sixteen locations, some of them with a strong connection to the river. That is the case, for example, of the river ports of Vila Real de Santo António and Alcoutim, the saltpans of Castro Marim or the various fishing villages along the river, such as Foz de Odeleite and Guerreiros do Rio, where the River Museum is located. The Castle of Alcoutim stands out as a prime example of the region's historical heritage. It was a strategic place to support navigation, since it was here that the boats had to wait for the low tide before they could go down the river. There's also the Castle of Castro Marim, important for the defence of the territory, which was once the first headquarters of the Order of Christ.

The landscape is generally characterised by large areas of cistus and carob trees and



Boat near Alcoutim quay

stone pine plantations. In the villages of the valleys near the Guadiana and its main tributaries there are small vegetable gardens with traditional crops, such as dryland orchards of fig, almond and carob trees. You can also witness or experience activities such as the production of honey, aromatic



and medicinal plants, cattle raising and various forms of nature tourism. The Guadiana River is rich in fish communities. It is the bay with the highest diversity of fish in all of Portugal. And since the tide reaches up to Mértola, fish typical of marine and estuarine habitats reach even the inner zones of the

river. The streams that flow into the Guadiana, besides being home to a high quantity of fish (including some endemic species), function as ecological corridors to a great variety of species, such as the otter. In a not-so-distant future, maybe even the Iberian Lynx will get to return to these valleys.



Arrival at the Pontal viewpoint



Ribeira de Odeleite, near Moinho das Pernadas

**Name of the trail:** Great Route of the Guadiana (GR15)

**Municipalities:** Vila Real de Santo António, Castro Marim and Alcoutim

**Location:** Baixo Guadiana territory in the Algarve.

**How to get there and start/end points:** Alcoutim, Castro Marim and Vila Real de Santo António.

**Type of Trail:** walking and cycling trail. Linear.

**Distance:** 65 km

**Average duration:** 3 days

**When to go:** all year except summer

**Approval:** in-process

**Signposted:** yes, with signage so you can hike in both directions.

**Party Responsible:** Odiana – Associação para o Desenvolvimento do Baixo Guadiana

**Remarks:** more information on [www.baixoguadiana.com](http://www.baixoguadiana.com) website, including news and links to download trail information brochures.

# Descoberta Trail



Casas Novas

The Descoberta Trail is a circular Great Route (GR23), located in the Serra do Caldeirão. This GR goes through the villages of Casas Baixas, Feiteira and Mealha. You can opt

to do different stretches of the GR23, which connect these three villages, or do the whole trail. These three villages have support infrastructure to host hikers, the



Rural World Discovery Centres (renovated primary schools), which you can book in advance, so you have more time to get to know the population's way of life and

explore local heritage.

The landscape is marked by an extensive mass of round-shaped schist, interspersed by streams, some of which temporary. In this Great Route you will cross two of the main tributaries of the Guadiana River's left bank, the Foupana and Odeleite rivers.

The vegetation is dominated by cistus, as the soil was once intensely used to grow cereal. Nowadays the agriculture is mainly one of subsistence, and there are also afforestation projects (pines and holm oaks) and orchard plantations, especially cork oak and strawberry trees. In some places there are still groves of holm and cork oaks, some growing into forests. Strawberry trees, cistus, tree heath and others grow under the trees. This is made possible by the absence of agricultural or animal husbandry activities. As a result of low human activity and the natural conditions of the ground vegetation, this territory is particularly suitable for birdwatching, namely birds of prey like the Bonelli's eagle, the short-toed snake eagle, or the eagle-owl, not to mention a diverse community of passerine birds.

The built heritage along this route is especially interesting and diverse. The natural architecture of the Algarve's mountains is a living testament of the past, preserving the authenticity and uniqueness of these villages with features such as norias, dry-stone walls, traditional hay sheds, stepping stones to cross the rivers, and old windmills.



Rural World Discovery Centre of Mealha



Scrubland and pine forest in Felteira





**Name of the Trail:** Descoberta Route (GR23)

**Municipalities:** Tavira

**Location:** the Algarve

**How to get there and start/end points:** Casas Baixas, Feiteira, Mealha (villages of the civil parish of Cachopo).

**Type of Trail:** walking and cycling. Circular.

**Distance:** 45 km

**Average duration:** trail divided into 3 stretches of 12 km, 16 km and 17 km. The duration of each stretch ranges from 4 to 8 hours.

**When to visit:** all year except summer or very hot days, usually between July and August.

**Approval:** yes

**Signposted:** yes, with intuitive signage so you can hike in both directions.

**Responsible Party:** Associação In-Loco

**Remarks:** more information on the [in-loco.pt](http://in-loco.pt) webpage, including news and links to download trail information brochures.

# guide to walking trails

## FAUNA

**Common name** - *Scientific name*

**African stonechat** - *Saxicola torquata*

**American flamingo** - *Phoenicopterus ruber*

**Azure-winged magpie** - *Cyanopica cyanus*

**Beech marten** - *Martes foina*

**Blackbird** - *Turdus merula*

**Black-headed gull** - *Larus ridibundus*

**Black-tailed godwit** - *Limosa limosa*

**Black-winged stilt** - *Himantopus himantopus*

**Blue rock thrush** - *Monticola solitarius*

**Boga-de-boca-arqueada (PT)** - *Chondrostoma lemmingii*

**Bonelli's eagle** - *Hieraetus fasciatus*

**Bordalo (PT)** - *Rutilus alburnoides*

**Cabrera's vole** - *Microtus cabreræ*

**Caspian gull** - *Larus cachinnans*

**Cattle egret** - *Bubulcus ibis*

**Chameleon** - *Chamaeleo chamaeleon*

**Cockle** - *Cerastoderma edule*

**Common bent-wing bat** - *Miniopterus schreibersii*

**Common buzzard** - *Buteo buteo*

**Common chaffinch** - *Fringilla coelebs*

**Common genet** - *Genetta genetta*

**Common kestrel** - *Falco tinnunculus*

**Common linnet** - *Carduelis cannabina*

**Common moorhen** - *Gallinula chloropus*

**Common quail** - *Coturnix coturnix*

**Common redshank** - *Tringa totanus*

**Common tern** - *Sterna albifrons*

**Common tern** - *Sterna albifrons*

**Common whitethroat** - *Sylvia communis*

**Corn bunting** - *Miliaria calandra*

**Dartford warbler** - *Sylvia undata*

**Donkey** - *Equus asinus*

**Dunlin** - *Calidris alpina*

**Eagle-owl** - *Bubo bubo*

**Egyptian mongoose** - *Herpestes ichneumon*

**Escalo-do-Arade (PT)** - *Squalius aradensis*

**Eurasian blue tit** - *Parus caeruleus*

**Eurasian coot** - *Fulica atra*

**Eurasian curlew** - *Numenius arquata*

**Eurasian golden oriole** - *Oriolus oriolus*

**Eurasian nuthatch** - *Sitta europaea*

**Eurasian Spoonbill** - *Platalea leucorodia*

**Eurasian wigeon** - *Anas penelope*

**European badger** - *Meles meles*

**European bee-eater** - *Merops apiaster*

**European goldfinch** - *Carduelis carduelis*

**European green woodpecker** - *Picus viridis*

**European greenfinch** - *Carduelis chloris*

**European hedgehog** - *Erinaceus europaeus*

**European pond turtle** - *Emys orbicularis*

**European rabbit** - *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

**European roller** - *Coracias garrulus*

**European turtle dove** - *Streptopelia turtur*

**Ferruginous duck** - *Aythya nyroca*

**Fire salamander** - *Salamandra salamandra*

**Great cormorant** - *Phalacrocorax carbo*

**Great spotted woodpecker** - *Dendrocopos major*

**Great tit** - *Parus major*

**Grey heron** - *Ardea cinerea*

**Grooved carpet shell** - *Ruditapes decussatus*

**Hoopoe** - *Upupa epops*

**Iberian emerald lizard** - *Lacerta schreiberi*

**Iberian green frog** - *Rana perezi*

**Iberian hare** - *Lepus granatensis*

**Iberian Lynx** - *Lynx pardinus*

**Iberian midwife toad** - *Alytes cisternasii*

**Iberian ribbed newt** - *Pleurodeles waltl*

**Jay** - *Garrulus glandarius*

**Kentish plover** - *Charadrius alexandrinus*

**Kingfisher** - *Alcedo atthis*

**Ladder snake** - *Elaphe scalaris*

**Lesser mouse-eared bat** - *Myotis blythii*

**Lesser spotted woodpecker** - *Dendrocopos minor*

**Little bittern** - *Ixobrychus minutus*

**Little egret** - *Egretta garzetta*

**Little grebe** - *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

**Little owl** - *Athene noctua*

**Mallard** - *Anas platyrhynchos*

**Mediterranean gull** - *Larus melanocephalus*

**Mediterranean pond turtle** - *Mauremys leprosa*

**Mediterranean tree frog** - *Hyla meridionalis*

**Montpellier snake** - *Malpolon monspessulanus*

**Natterjack toad** - *Bufo calamita*

**Northern gannet** - *Morus bassanus*  
**Northern shoveler** - *Anas clypeata*  
**Ocellated lizard** - *Lacerta lepida*  
**Otter** - *Lutra lutra*  
**Oyster** - *Crassostrea* spp.  
**Peregrine falcon** - *Falco peregrinus*  
**Pied avocet** - *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
**Purple heron** - *Ardea purpurea*  
**Raven** - *Corvus corax*  
**Red fox** - *Vulpes vulpes*  
**Red knot** - *Calidris canutus*  
**Red-backed shrike** - *Lanius collurio*  
**Red-legged partridge** - *Alectoris rufa*  
**Rock bunting** - *Emberiza cia*  
**Rock dove** - *Columbia livia*  
**Ruddy turnstone** - *Arenaria interpres*  
**Sardinian warbler** - *Sylvia melanocephala*  
**Short-toed snake eagle** - *Circaetus gallicus*  
**Short-toed treecreeper** - *Certhia brachydactyla*  
**Skunk** - *Mustela nivalis*  
**Spanish minnowcarp** - *Anaocypris hispanica*  
**Spanish psammodromus** - *Psammodromus hispanicus*  
**Thekla's lark** - *Galerida theklae*  
**Tuna** - *Thunnus albacares*  
**Viperine water snake** - *Natrix maura*  
**Water snake** - *Natrix* sp.  
**West African fiddler crab** - *Uca tangeri*  
**Western jackdaw** - *Corvus monedula*  
**Western swamphen** - *Porphyrio porphyrio*  
**White stork** - *Ciconia ciconia*  
**White wagtail** - *Motacilla alba*  
**Wild boar** - *Sus scrofa*  
**Wildcat** - *Felis silvestris*

## FLORA

**Common name** - *Scientific name*

**Acacia** - *Acacia* spp.  
**Alcar-do-Algarve (PT)** - *Tuberaria major*  
**Aleppo pine** - *Pinus halepensis*  
**Algarvian Greenweed** - *Genista hirsuta* subsp. *algarbiensis*

**Alkali seepweed** - *Suaeda vera*  
**Almond tree** - *Prunus dulcis*  
**Ash tree** - *Fraxinus angustifolia*  
**Basil-leaved rock rose** - *Halimium ocymoides*  
**Bay laurel** - *Laurus nobilis*  
**Black alder** - *Alnus glutinosa*  
**Bridal broom** - *Retama monosperma*  
**Bulrush** - *Typha* spp.  
**Bush restharrow** - *Ononis natrix* ssp. *ramosissima*  
**Butcher's broom** - *Ruscus aculeatus*  
**Camphor thyme** - *Thymus camphoratus*  
**Carob tree** - *Ceratonia siliqua*  
**Cistus** - *Cistus ladanifer*  
**Common club-rush** - *Scirpus* spp.  
**Common hawthorn** - *Crataegus monogyna*  
**Common holly** - *Ilex aquifolium*  
**Common reed** - *Phragmites australis*  
**Conehead thyme** - *Thymbra capitata*  
**Cork oak** - *Quercus suber*  
**Cripus rockrose** - *Cistus crispus*  
**Curry plant** - *Helichrysum italicum*  
**Dwarf Gorse** - *Ulex minor*  
**Eagle fern** - *Pteridium aquilinum*  
**Elmleaf blackberry** - *Rubus ulmifolius*  
**Esteva-de-Sagres (PT)** - *Cistus palhinhae*  
**Eucalyptus** - *Eucalyptus globulus*  
**European beachgrass** - *Ammophila arenaria*  
**European searocket** - *Cakile maritima*  
**Evergreen honeysuckle** - *Lonicera implexa*  
**Evergreen rose** - *Rosa sempervirens*  
**False olive** - *Phillyrea angustifolia*  
**Fennel** - *Foeniculum vulgare*  
**Fig tree** - *Ficus carica*  
**Flax-leaved daphne** - *Daphne gnidium*  
**French lavender** - *Lavandula stoechas*  
**Giant reed** - *Arundo donax*  
**Green lavender** - *Lavandula viridis*  
**Grey-leaved cistus** - *Cistus albidus*  
**Hart's pennyroyal** - *Mentha cervina*  
**Heather** - *Caruma vulgaris*  
**Holm oak** - *Quercus rotundifolia*  
**Iberian pear** - *Pyrus bourgaeana*  
**Juniper** - *Juniperus turbinata*  
**Kermes oak** - *Quercus coccifera*

**Lady's glove** - *Digitalis purpurea*  
**Laurestine** - *Viburnum tinus*  
**Maritime pine** - *Pinus pinaster*  
**Mastic tree** - *Pistacia lentiscus*  
**Mediterranean dwarf palm** - *Chamaerops humilis*  
**Mediterranean saltbush** - *Atriplex halimus*  
**Montpellier cistus** - *Cistus monspeliensis*  
**Mountain sandwort** - *Arenaria montana*  
**Myrtle** - *Myrtus communis*  
**Norfolk pine** - *Araucaria heterophylla*  
**Oak** - *Quercus* spp.  
**Oleander** - *Nerium oleander*  
**Olive tree** - *Olea europaea* var. *europaea*  
**Olive tree** - *Olea europaea* var. *sylvestris*  
**Pennyroyal** - *Mentha pulegium*  
**Platanus** - *Platanus* spp.  
**Pond Water-crowfoot** - *Ranunculus peltatus*  
**Poplar** - *Populus* spp.  
**Poplar-leaved cistus** - *Cistus populifolius*  
**Portuguese crowberry** - *Corema album*  
**Portuguese thyme** - *Thymus carnosus*  
**Prickly saltwort** - *Salsola kali*  
**Purple Phlomis** - *Phlomis purpurea*  
**Rhododendron** - *Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *baeticum*  
**Rosa-albardeira (PT)** - *Paeonia broteri*  
**Rosemary** - *Rosmarinus officinalis*  
**Rush** - *Juncus* spp.  
**Sage-leaved rock-rose** - *Cistus salvifolius*  
**Sand couch-grass** - *Elymus farctus*  
**Sea daffodil** - *Pancratium maritimum*  
**Sea holly** - *Eryngium maritimum*  
**Sea purslane** - *Halimione portulacoides*  
**Seashore false bindweed** - *Calystegia soldanella*  
**Seaside chamomile** - *Anthemis maritima*  
**Spanish heath** - *Erica australis*  
**Spiny rush** - *Juncus acutus*  
**Spiny thrift** - *Armeria pungens*  
**Spotted Yellow Sun Rose** - *Halimium halimifolium*  
**Stone pine** - *Pinus pinea*  
**Strawberry tree** - *Arbutus unedo*  
**Sweet cherry** - *Prunus avium*

**Sweet chestnut** - *Castanea sativa*  
**Tamarisk tree** - *Tamarix africana*  
**Tamujo (PT)** - *Flueggea tinctoria*  
**Tojo-de-Sagres (PT)** - *Ulex erinaceus*  
**Tojo-gatum (PT)** - *Stauracanthus boivinii*  
**Tojo-prateado (PT)** - *Ulex argenteus*  
**Tree heath** - *Erica arborea*  
**Willow** - *Salix* spp.

# glossary

**Apiculture** - Breeding of bees for harvesting honey.

**Arable** - Plant that grows or lives on tilled fields; herbaceous crops which produce grain and fodder.

**Barrocal Algarvio** - Area of limestone soils stretching across the central part of the Algarve between the Serra and the coastal strip, with its own characteristic vegetation largely unique to this area.

**Biodiversity** - Includes diversity within a species, between species and comparative diversity between ecosystems.

**Bog/Marsh** - Land subject to flooding.

**Bridal broom bush** - Area dominated by the species *Retama monosperma*, a shrub typical of secondary dunes (where it may form more or less dense scrublands) or undercover of coastal pine forests.

**Carnivore** - An animal that feeds predominantly on the flesh of other animals.

**Cave-dwelling** - An animal that inhabits or takes shelter in caves.

**Dolmen** - Pre-historic monument consisting of a large horizontal stone slab resting on upright stones.

**Dryland crops** - Crops that do not need to be irrigated.

**Dryland orchard** - Area of fruit-bearing trees. May consist of trees of various species (almonds, carobs, figs and olives).

**Dune** - Mound or ridge of sand formed by the wind or the sea.

**Endemism** - An organism that is exclusive to a specific geographic region.

**Footpath** - Narrow path created by people and animals passing through.

**Habitat** - A place with specific geophysical

conditions where a particular species or group of species lives.

**Halophytic vegetation** - Vegetation found in highly saline environments.

**Hibernation** - Dormant state adopted by some animals during the winter as a means of adapting to cold and lack of food, with the aim of conserving energy.

**Igneous massif** - Mountainous area resulting from the cooling of magma.

**Karst landscape** - Limestone landscape characterised by absence of surface water, sinkholes and a well-developed underwater drainage system with caves.

**Lagoon** - Coastal basin separated from the sea by a dune cordon.

**Limestone breccia** - Limestone fragments cemented together by calcium carbonate cement.

**Marsh vegetation** - Vegetation of still waters (bogs, marshes) and wetlands.

**Mastic grove** - Area predominantly covered in mastic trees (*Pistacia lentiscus*).

**Mediterranean scrub forest** - Area of very dense scrub, mainly shrubby species typically found in Mediterranean climates (e.g. the genera *Cistus*, *Erica*, *Rosmarinus* and *Lavandula*).

**Mediterranean woodland** - Densely wooded area, mainly composed of holm oaks, cork oaks and pines in their most mature form.

**Menhir** - Pre-historic monument consisting of standing stones (orthostats), some of them quite tall.

**Montado** - In Portuguese, semi-natural woodland consisting of open woodland underlain by natural and semi-natural pastures. The tree species are usually cork oaks and holm oaks.

**Monte** - In Portuguese, a small group of houses in an isolated location; a typical village.

**Native vegetation** - Vegetation which comes from a specific ecosystem or geographic region.

**Natura 2000 Network** - European ecological network established to foster and protect biodiversity through the conservation of different types of habitat and wild fauna and flora in the European Union.

**Noria** - Device for raising water from a well.

**Outcrop** - Exposed rock on the surface of the terrain.

**Passerine** - Bird, usually small, belonging to the order *Passeriformes* (e.g. sparrows, finches, tits).

**Pequena Rota** - (literally 'short route') This is a trail identified by the abbreviation "PR", followed by its registration number in the corresponding municipality. It is signposted by red and yellow posts, takes less than a day to complete and is less than 30 km in length.

**Pioneer plants** - Plants that begin the colonisation of a certain ecosystem, initiating the process of ecological succession. They are considered more resistant to extreme abiotic factors (temperature, humidity or salinity).

**POGI** - Point Of Geological Interest.

**Riverine** - Refers to vegetation growing on the banks of watercourses or wetlands.

**Saltmarsh** - Wetland with characteristic vegetation that tolerates salty soil.

**Silt** - Muddy deposit.

**Southwest Script** - Also known as Tartessian or South Lusitanian, Southwest Script is an Iron Age alphabet circumscribed to the south of Spain and Portugal. Most of the known inscriptions were discovered in the area between the Alentejo and the Algarve, in particular in the Caldeirão mountain range.

**Stepping stones** - Sets of stones arranged to allow passage across the banks of a watercourse.

**Succulent plants** - Plants with roots, stalks or leaves modified to allow them to store more water and resist long dry periods.

**Taipa (construction)** - A constructive technique which consists of compacting dry/wet earth between planks (*taipais*) and in layers, with the aid of a mallet or pestle.

**Tidal creek** - Narrow arm of a river or sea that extends inland.

**Undergrowth** - Layer of vegetation growing beneath the tree cover.

**Waders** - Member of a group of birds comprising several families, usually found in wetland areas (e.g. dunlins, sandpipers, plovers).

**Watermill** - Mill powered by a waterwheel.

**Weir** - A small stone dam that holds and raises water from rivers and streams, which it then transports to the mill via millstreams.

**Wetland** - Any coastal or inland area permanently or temporarily inundated by water.

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### **Cartographic Base**

Geographic Institute of the Portuguese Army

### **Layout and Design**

Nata Design

### **Translation**

Da Vinci Traduções

### **Printing**

Lusoimpress

### **Edition**

500 copies

### **Distribution**

Free

### **Legal deposit**

462448/19

### **3rd edition**

Promoter



Funding



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secret

