

JJ Villas

Luxury Villas in the Algarve



Algarve History

Due to the importance of its position on the world map this province was at one time its own Kingdom. It has been invaded and fought over by the Phoenicians, Romans and Moors. Closely associated with the sea throughout its history this was the base of the famous Henry the Navigator who, from the point at Sagres organized the 15th Century exploration of the New World.

Algarve Description

The Algarve is composed of 5,411 km² with approx. 350,000 permanent inhabitants. This figure can swell to over a million people at the height of the summer. Its administrative centre is Faro controlling 16 Municipalities, who in turn govern a total of 77 Parishes.

The length of the south-facing coastline is approx. 155 km and stretches about 52 km to the north on the west. At the widest point to the north, it is approximately 36 km deep. Communication is by road but there is single-track railway line running from Lagos to Vila Real do Santo António that also links to the line running to Lisbon and the north. The old “EN125” main road runs along the whole coast and has now been partially replaced by a new dual carriageway “Via do Infante” starting at the border to Spain and stretching west to eventually link up with Lagos and at Albufeira it joins with the main road to Lisbon. This motorway has been extended to Alcantarilha some 17 km further west and is now in process of construction to the town of Lagos. There is one international airport located close to Faro which conveniently lies in the middle of the Algarve.

There are about 100 sandy attractive beaches washed by the Atlantic Ocean and due to the maritime shelf and water currents the sea temperature can be surprisingly warm even in some winter months. Located on the tip of Europe with the vast ocean of the Atlantic as its southern and western border, this enviable position gives this region possibly the most unpolluted climate in the European continent.

The interior from the coast greatly varies in its picturesque appeal due to its variety of fauna, soil and contours. In January and February the coast is painted white with almond blossom shading the many varieties of wild orchids. In March, the heady perfume of orange blossom mixes with the bloom of acacias. During the month of April the bountiful wild flowers give cause to the delightful music of the many colourful birds. May and June is the time to see the raw beauty of the striking bare barks of stripped cork trees in contrast to the palette purple of the jacaranda. July is the time of cherries, strawberries and melons. August and September provide the picking of grapes, figs and almonds. November is for the gathering of chestnuts for the national festival of São Martinho. Whilst, in December it is time to start picking the famous sweet juicy Algarve oranges which continue through to March.

Away from the immediate coastal plain are the foothills leading up to the highest point Foia (902m) above the unspoilt village of Monchique. This mountain area is well known for the layers of Roman terraces with granite stone walls that provide the stream of local vegetables that can be found on sale in the local market. Also, from this region comes the local brewed drink “Medronho” that is best drunk in one of the many local taverns.

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Vila Real de Santo António History

The origin of the town was as a small fishing port and probably dates back to Phoenician times. Due to the topographical flatness of the area the neighbouring hill of Castro Marim lent itself to a stronger fortified location. This frontier town with Spain was especially designed and rebuilt after the earthquake of 1755 by the Marquês de Pombal, an important minister in the 18th Century who redesigned the centre of the City of Lisbon.

Vila Real de Santo António Description

Today, these townhouses around the main square are showing serious degradation with the passing of time. With the construction to the north of a new bridge in 1991 across the River Guadiana connecting Seville in Spain with the Algarve, the obvious diminishing of the popularity of this town will have further effect. Between this town and the Ocean is the popular beach resort area named Monte Gordo that offers the tourist km of sea washed beach lined with a pine forest. The population of approximately 14,000 inhabitants tends to gain their living either in the tourist industry, fishing, or trading across the river with their Spanish neighbors. It is a very pleasant and relaxing experience to cross the river by ferryboat to visit the Spanish town of Ayamonte, or take a tourist trip upstream to the charming small Portuguese town of Alcoutim.

Vila Real de Santo António - Nearby Locations

North of Vila Real de Santo António is Castro Marim that due to its location has played a considerable part in the history of Portugal. This later town was originally chosen as the founding headquarters in 1319 of the 14th Century movement of the Order of Christ. Although the buildings are now in ruins from the effects of the 1755 earthquake it still has the unusual feature of having a castle within a castle.

In the 17th Century a stronger and more defensive stronghold was built on a hilltop to the north that also still remains. The castle acted as a well-known haven to escapees in the early days of the Spanish Inquisition. From the walls the view is to the south across the flat lands that are now a nature reserve for birds and plants and is known as the Reserva Natural do Sapal.

Near to Vila Real de Santo António is the purely holiday destinations of Manta Rota, Monte Gordo and Praia Verde, all providing long sandy beaches. Inland, and up river is the interior small administrative town of Alcoutim with its ruins of a 14th Century castle and its local museum. This small town looks across the River Guadiana at the Spanish town of Sanlúcar. It was at this town that Dom Fernando I signed in 1371 a peace treaty with King Enrique II de Castile.

Even further up river is the town of Mértola with its 13th Century castle ruins. The Phoenicians founded this historic town as an inland port and later successfully used by both the Romans and Moors. Perched on a high spur overlooking the River Guadiana this town has many vestiges of the past and a museum housing one of Portugal's best collections of Islamic art.

Back on the coast the small beachside village of Cacela-a-Velha dates back to Phoenician times and has an 18th Century Fort that enjoys a natural lagoon between itself and the protecting sandbar.

Vila Real de Santo António Events

February - Feira de Vila R. de Sta. António
April - Festival do Teatro (Theatre)
13th May - Municipal Holiday
May and June - Festival da Musica
July - Rota do Atum (Tuna Fish)
September - Festival de Folclore
10th to 12th October - Beach Fair

Useful Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8900
Town Hall - 281 511 030
Fire Brigade - 281 512 777
Police - 281 430 66
Emergency Treatment - 281 511 374
Ambulance - 281 512 777
Tourist Office - 281 544 495

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Tavira History

Tavira along with Lagos is one of the most architecturally attractive towns in the Algarve and its origin dates back to around 2.000 BC. During the occupation of the Algarve by the Moors this town was considered of great importance due to its fishing industry. Dom Paio Peres Correia took it from the Moors in anger in 1242 after seven of his principal Knights were killed during a period of truce. In the 17th Century the port in its river was of considerable importance, shipping produce such as salt, dried fish and wine. Like most of the Algarve its buildings were all virtually destroyed by the earthquake of 1755.

Tavira Description

The town has since been rebuilt with many fine 18th Century fine buildings along with its 37 churches. A Roman bridge links the two parts of the town across the River Gilão. The church of Santa Maria do Castelo is built on the site of a Moorish Mosque and in it is the tombs of Dom Paio Peres Correia and his seven Knights. Its original economic reliance on the fishing industry has now been surpassed due to the change in the migration patterns of the tuna fish. The population is in the region of 20,000 inhabitants supporting a military base whilst the surrounding area is still very rural and undeveloped. This is now changing due to the demands of the tourist industry and opening of golf courses in the near vicinity. The beach for this town lies past the salt pans and is reached by a ferryboat that takes the visitor to the sandy-bar island known as Ilha de Tavira.

Tavira - Nearby Locations

Near to Tavira is Cabanas and Pedras del Rey, both small beachfront villages catering specifically for the tourist. It is in the latter that there exists an olive tree that is said to date from the 17th Century and probably the oldest one of its type in Portugal. It stands 7.70 metres high and its girth is 11.80 metres. In the small village of Luz de Tavira there is one of the finest examples of Manueline craftsmanship around the southern door of the Parish Church. Santa Luzia gets its name from a shipwrecked Italian effigy of the Virgin Mary and is a very small unspoilt village with a fort. Near to the Torre de Aves there is the remains of a Roman villa. To the east of Tavira and overlooking the sea is the still original traditional village of Cacela-a-Velha used by the Phoenicians and later becoming the possession of the Knights of Santiago in 1240.

Tavira Events

June - Popular Saints Festivities
August - Handicraft Festival
August 1st - Feira de Boa Morte
August 8th to 11th - Feira de Santa Luzia
October 4th to 6th - Feira de São Francisco
3rd Monday of the month - Monthly Day
24th of June - Municipal Day

Useful Tavira Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8800
Town Hall - 281 325 021
Fire Brigade - 281 322 122
Police - 281 220 220
Hospital: 281 324 023
Emergency Treatment - 281 324 023
Ambulance - 281 325 473
Tourist Office - 281 322 511

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Olhão History

The town of Olhão is essentially and historically linked to the local fishing industry and only grew into existence in the 17th Century. It has about 30,000 inhabitants and was raised to the status of a town after 17 local fishermen successfully crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1808 in the fishing boat “Bom Sucesso” without charts. Their purpose was to announce to the exiled King of Portugal, Dom João IV, that the French invading armies had been defeated and had returned to France leaving Portugal free for the King to return. It was in this town in 1882 that the first canning factory for tuna and sardines was established. Very soon canning factories spread along the coast and it became the leading industry of the Algarve.

Olhão Description

Architecturally the town is well known for an older quarter where the flat terraced roofs and straight box-shaped chimneys show a definite Moorish flavor. Another architectural curiosity is the fish market in a long unattractive building on the waterfront. Every morning there is a lively noisy atmosphere and the impressively large variety of fish offered by the local catch is displayed to tempt the housewife.

Olhão - Nearby Locations

Traveling east from Olhão is the small sea village of Fuseta with the ruins of a castle and the older similar architectural style houses. To the north is the village of Moncarapacho with a 16th Century Church and a small local museum next door. On the nearby hill named Cerro da Cabeça there is a popular Grotto named after the village. From the town of Olhão there is a ferry service that takes visitors to the nearby small islands of Ilha da Culatra and Ilha da Armona. With their unspoilt sandy beaches and lack of construction these islands act as a pleasant contrast to the noise and bustle of the neighboring town.

Olhão Events Useful

August - Festival do Marisco (Shellfish)
3rd Weekend of August -Feira da Laranja
3rd Monday every month - Market Day
3rd September - Municipal Day

Olhão Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8700
Town Hall - 289 700 100
Fire Brigade - 289 713 202
Police - 289 702 144
Emergency Treatment - 289 704 648
Ambulance - 289 702 108
Tourist Office - 289 713 936

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Faro History

Faro is the administrative centre for the whole of the Algarve region with a population in excess of 40,000 people. The city has both Arab and Roman ruins but most of the present attractive older buildings were constructed after the disastrous earthquake of 1755 and the earlier one of 1532. The Moors who occupied the place in the 8th Century originally gave to it the name of Ossónoba and developed it into a trading port until 1249 when they were defeated by the forces of Dom Afonso III. With the decline of the importance of the City of Silves this town took over the role of administration of the Algarve area. The Earl of Essex ransacked this town in 1596 with his fellow crusaders on their journey to the Holy Land and the collection of books taken from the palace of the Bishop of Faro became part of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England. Another interesting item is that during the 500 years of Moorish occupation there were some Jewish inhabitants in Faro who were busily printing copies of the Old Testament.

Faro Description

Particularly attractive is the old part of the city surrounded still by the Roman walls. Inside a spacious open square that once was the site of the Roman Forum is a 13th Century Cathedral that faces the 18th Century Episcopal palace. An interesting building is the neighboring 16th Century Convent that is now turned into the home of the city's archaeological museum. Within it is a section devoted to the Arab occupation. The "golden" church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo is claimed to be the best example of gold-leaf woodwork in southern Portugal. It is also contains the macabre spectacle of a chapel lined with the bones from over 1,200 monks! Next to the small boat basin bordering the Praça de Dom Francisco Gomes is a small Naval Museum composed of scale model boats and galleons showing the maritime history of the coast. Much of the city is now composed of apartments and there are many attractive shops and a particularly artistic theatre. Faro is also the home of the Ria Formosa lagoon, a nature reserve of over 17.000 hectares and a stopping place for hundreds of different birds during the spring and autumn migratory periods. The beach is almost 7 kms distant from the city and is a long sandy spit reached by crossing a bridge not far from the International Airport. The municipal council has an active cultural department organizing different and various events during the year.

Faro - Nearby Locations

Near to Faro is the small town of Almancil that nearby can be found the church of São Lourenço de Matos renown for its 18th Century blue tiles. At the inland village of Estói there are some notable roman ruins of Milreu depicting a home that enjoyed more comforts than some of the newly built villas in today's world. The well-known developments of Quinta do Lago and Vale de Lobo, both five star holiday areas are located west of Faro. Together they provide 7 top quality golf courses, tennis centres, riding schools, hotels, holiday resorts and villas.

Faro Events

March - Traditional Burial Procession
June - Feira de Arte e Artesanato (Art & Handicrafts)
July - Concentração Internacional de Motos (Motorbikes)
October - Feira de Santa Iria
24th June - Town Holiday

Useful Faro Telephone Number

Postal Code - 8000
Town Hall - 289 822 942
Fire Brigade - 289 802 902
Police - 289 822 022
Transit Police - 289 803 700
Hospital - 289 803 411
Emergency Treatment - 289 823 680
Ambulance - 289 822 122
Tourist Office - 289 803 604

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Introduction to Almancil

This town has become an important centre for providing supporting services to feed the needs of two nearby stylish well-established holiday and residential developments; Quinta do Lago and Vale do Lobo. In keeping with the needs of the area there are a good selection of restaurants offering many different forms of cuisine. Also, as to be expected there are a good number of real estate offices, interior decorators and furnishing shops. Close to and going to the east of Almancil is a small place named São Lourenço. The church here is well worth a visit as it is covered inside with beautiful 18th Century ceramic tiles and is an outstanding example in the Algarve. Also, very close by you will find the São Lourenço Cultural Centre that is open to the public. This Centre has been established for many years and mounts regular art exhibitions and music events.

Useful Almancil Telephone Numbers

Town Hall (Loulé) - 289 415 000
Fire Brigade (Loulé) - 289 416 702
Police (Loulé) - 289 462 782
Emergency Treatment - 289 395 674
Ambulance - 289 416 702

Useful Almancil Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 22 Kms
Postal Code – 8135

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Loulé History

This place is a rural administrative and active market town with some remains of a castle dating back to the 12th Century. The Arab castle has been virtually destroyed leaving some walls still standing that are now surrounded by modern buildings. Like most other towns in the Algarve, most of the older potentially interesting buildings have been destroyed in the earthquake that occurred in 1755.

Loulé Description

Within the remaining walls is a museum with an explanation of what was in the past the grandeur of the castle. The various earthquakes that it has suffered through its history have damaged the 13th Century Church of São Clemente. However, its Gothic arches and side chapels are remaining from the 16th Century have survived. The town Loulé consisting of some 20,000 residents is mainly concerned in producing souvenir products made out of copperware, leather, cane and wood. The weekly Fair attracts tourists from all along the Algarve. Due to the needs of the tourist industry this town has blossomed in size. An important event is the annual Carnival in February that is considered to be one of the best in Portugal. In the town there is a recently opened Museum that is devoted to the local industry of dried fruits and it is interesting to see how these items are prepared for the public. To the west of the town is a hilltop Church that is built on the site of a 16th Century chapel. This is the destination of an annual religious procession that requires some physical effort on the part of the bearers of the church's religious shrines.

Loulé - Nearby Locations

Near to Loulé is Almancil a small town that acts as a supplier of services to the prosperous holiday areas just south on the coast. Further inland is the small village of Alte, a village that is known for its unspoilt rural architecture and its enthusiasm for folk music. Another inland village is Paderne that has a romantic ruined 13th Century castle sitting alone on the crest of a deserted hilltop. The coastal town of Quarteira that was once a fishing village is now converted into a multi-apartment tourist location. Not too far away is the village of Querença with its stalactite caves; the village of Salir with ruins of a castle and nearby two 800 meters long walls from the Neolithic period. São Brás de Alportel and Santa Bárbara de Nexe, are both small country towns with their essential Portuguese flavor reflecting the rural social style of life. In São Bras de Alportel is an interesting museum that houses a permanent collection of rural artifacts and costumes truly reflecting the past manner of living in the Algarve.

Loulé Events

February/March - Carnival Procession
May - Feira de Mãe Soberana
July/August - Festival de Jazz
August - Festa do Petisco
1st Saturday of each month - Market Day
13th May - Municipal Day

Useful Loulé Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8100
Town Hall - 289 400 600
Fire Brigade - 289 516 702
Police - 289 416 408
Emergency Treatment - 289 313 665
Ambulance - 289 516 702
Tourist Office - 289 463 900

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Introduction to Quarteira

Another once upon a time small fishing village that has grown since the 1960s into a major tourist location. Tall blocks of holiday apartments now dwarf the older area of the town. As it lies next door to the well-known and popular Vilamoura holiday resort it acts as a dormitory location for the many employees and companies involved in the tourist trade. However, it also enjoys its own loyal tourists who return annually to make use of its long open beach and promenade. A little to the east of the town is Fonte Santa where a natural spring is said to have healing qualities. Reasonably close to Quarteira is the inland town of Almancil that is also a centre for service companies. The administrative town of the area is Loulé.

Useful Quarteira Telephone Numbers

Postal Code – 8125

Town Hall (Loulé) - 289 515 000

Fire Brigade - 289 323 132

Police - 289 462 782

Emergency Treatment - 289 313 665

Ambulance - 289 323 132

Tourist Office - 289 389 209

Introduction to Vilamoura

Vilamoura is the name given to an area rather than to any actual town. It is outstanding in that it is one of the largest single tourist complex in Europe and covers some 2,000 hectares of land. The land is variable in its vegetation, some parts covered in pine forests whilst others open recovered marshland.

The company that owns this complex is extremely environmentally conscious and every effort is being made to protect nature within its continued planned development. Due to its size it offers the visitor nearly every form of sport and entertainment and its southern border is lined by a long sandy beach and the Atlantic Ocean.

Amongst the many attractions and facilities there are four different Golf Courses, a large Marina, a Lawn Bowling Club, a Tennis Centre, a Sports Club, a Shooting Club, 5 Star and 4 Star Hotels, Tourist Apartments, self-catering Villas, Night Clubs, an International Casino, a Cinema, a private Airstrip and an excellent Riding School.

Within the center of Vilamoura there is a preserved Roman Site and Museum of Cerro da Vila providing an interesting glimpse into the past of the area. In Roman times this location was important in producing a fish paste known as “garum”. The ruins also include the baths in which the mariners used to bathe.

As a location specifically designed for tourism it has proved to be a very successful location for all ages due to the variety of its facilities that it provides holidaymakers. The municipal administration of the area falls under that of Loulé.

Vilamoura - Nearby Locations

Neighbouring the area is the once upon a time small fishing village of Quarteira that has since the 1960s blossomed into a dormitory town. To the northeast is the commercial and administrative town of Loulé.

Vilamoura Events

February - International Sailing Competition and International Almond Cross-Country Track Events

June - Vilamoura Dom Pedro International Triathlon

Useful Vilamoura Telephone Numbers

Town Hall (Loulé) - 289 515 000

Fire Brigade - 289 323 132

Police - 289 462 782

Emergency Treatment - 289 313 665

Ambulance - 289 323 132

Useful Vilamoura Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 28 Kms

Postal Code - 8125

Town Holidays – 8th May

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Albufeira History

In its history it was a thriving seaport and had its own castle that was later destroyed in the earthquake of 1755. Happily, most of the older parts of the town that survived have been carefully maintained. In the Roman times it was known as Baltum that then was later changed by the Moors to Al-Buhera. During the Moors 8th Century occupation the town it was to become an important trading port. In 1532 and in 1755 the place was badly hit by earthquakes, and in the later 227 people unluckily perished under the falling roof inside the parish church. During the "War of the Miguels" the town was besieged and set ablaze. The destroyed town consequently suffered a very long period of poverty and has only really now recovered with the boom of tourism.

Albufeira Description

As a result of the tide of tourism this once upon a time fishing village has expanded since the 1960s into a major holiday resort and now has over 12,000 permanent residents. The centre of the town changes its character after the sunsets. A plentiful collection of bars, restaurants and clubs start to fill-up with the tourist until they over spill into the narrow streets. There is a good selection of good beaches run both to the east and west from the town. Praia de Balaia, Praia de Castelo, Praia de Falésia, Praia de Galé, de Olhos d'Agua, Praia de Maria Luisa, and Praia de São Rafael, being the main ones. There is a small museum of 15th and 17th Century Ming ceramics and a Municipal art gallery that holds regular exhibitions during the season. A further addition to the town is a new Virtual Arqueológico Museum. A new Marina is nearing completion on the west side of the town and will offer a different and attractive aspect.

Albufeira - Nearby Locations

Other places near to Albufeira are, Armação de Pera, Boliqueime, Guia and Paderne with its ruined castle perched on an isolated hill some distance from the village. At Ponte Grande there are impressive caverns with large arches and the underwater caverns of Grutas do Xorino.

Albufeira Events

4th February - Feira do Pau Roxo
July - Feira de Artesanato (Handicraft)
August - Feira de Na. Sra. da Orada
August - Feira de Frango
28th & 29th August - Feira de Nossa Senhora da Guia

Useful Albufeira Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8200
Town Hall - 289 589 201
Fire Brigade - 289 586 333
Police - 289 587 809
Emergency Treatment - 289 587 550
Ambulance - 289 586 333
Tourist Office - 289 585 279

Useful Albufeira Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 47 Kms
Town Holidays - 20th August

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Armação de Pera History

Not very long ago this town was once nothing more than a collection of small shacks where the local residents from the nearby town of Pera used to maintain their fishing boats. It is quite probable that the name “Armação” is a link with the distant past of the great Tuna fishing industry that existed along the Algarve from the 15th Century and before. This later fell under the protection of a small 18th Century fort that still remains in part to this day.

Armação de Pera Description

Nowadays, the town is mainly composed of blocks of holiday apartments with many bars and restaurants on the ground floor. In the three summer months the town overflows with tourists but out of top of the season it offers a wonderful peaceful holiday location. Meanwhile the nearby rural village of Pera is now a reminder of the unspoilt typical sleepy Algarve. Boasting one of the finest longest sandy beaches in the Algarve this is a popular location for tourists. On the beach close to the eastern side of the town are a number of fish restaurants that pride themselves on their fresh fish. Happily, the major area behind this beach is now a protected zone against development of any kind. The actual spread of building from Armação de Pera has been to the west with the creation of many holiday apartment complexes above the charming beaches of Senhora da Rocha.

Armação de Pera - Nearby Locations

Places near to Armação de Pera are the market towns of Algoz, Alcantarilha, Porches and the inland historic and attractive City of Silves with its magnificent walls and castle

Useful Armação de Pera Telephone Numbers

Town Hall (Silves) - 282 442 325
Fire Brigade - 282 322 666
Police (Silves) - 282 442 414
Emergency Treatment - 282 312 572
Ambulance - 282 322 666
Tourist Office - 282 312 145

Useful Armação de Pera Facts

Town Holidays – 3rd September
Postal Code - 8365

Introduction to Carvoeiro

This was a very small intimate fishing village that has lost any resemblance to its modest origins. In 1965 a foreign resident wrote about the place “The mode of living remains essentially medieval”. Then there came the tourists and the money. Today, the village spreads to the east and west with expensive villas and comfortable holiday apartments. The one and only village street has now become three, each lined with bars, smart restaurants and tourist shops. Happily, there are still examples of the older quaint small houses tucked in between the more recent ones. A 36-Hole Golf & Holiday Complex can be found to the west of the village together with a well run Tennis Centre. To the east and on the outskirts is a further 9-Hole Course. The choice of this location for the tourist to acquire property was also because of the variety and attractiveness of its many small beaches. High cliffs surround most of these, and some of which have eroded to create beckoning dark caves. Most of them are mainly accessible only at low tide. Beaches to visit are Praia de Centianes, Praia de Carvalho, Praia de Benagil, Praia de Marinha and Praia da Albandeira.

Carvoeiro - Nearby Locations

Near to Carvoeiro is the village of Ferragudo, still an unspoilt fishing village. Lagoa the area administrative town is also close to the home of the 11th Century Arab poet "Ibn Ammar". Inland is the unspoilt small village of Porches. Another place that is a must to visit is the inland historic and interesting city of Silves with its fine remains of its castle.

Useful Carvoeiro Telephone Numbers

Postal Code – 8400
Town Hall (Lagoa) - 282 341 410

Emergency Treatment - 282 357 320
Tourist Office - 282 357 728

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Lagoa History

Somewhere between 1242 and 1246 the Moors took possession of this then small-fortified hamlet and placed it under the control of nearby Silves. The location was formally declared a town only to be severely destroyed by the earthquake of 1755. It was in this town in 1797 that the notorious bandit José Joaquim Sousa Reis known as Remexido was born. Commanding a fierce band of followers his acts are recoded as a mixture of good and bad legends and most of the Algarve and the neighbouring northern Alentejo district suffered by his hand. He died before a firing squad in 1838. The town of Lagoa has since grown as an administrative town for the area that once lived off its abundant agricultural products.

Lagoa Description

Within the town are a number of long buildings with double doors that open into courtyards, off which are often more than just a large storeroom with a suitable dwelling. The produce was dependent on the time of year and could be from carob beans to topsoil vegetable products. On the outskirts of the town is a co-operative for the owners of vineyards that still produce a full bodied red wine. This amount of wine produced has been seriously effected by the diminish of vineyards as their owners over recent years have found a new pot of gold by selling their land as building plots. The parish church was inaugurated in 1814 but there is the older church, the Igreja de Misericórdia that dates from the middle of the 18th Century. In August of every year an important mmercial and rural produce Fair named Fatacil is held in the town exhibiting products from all over Portugal. The occasion provides an excuse for enjoyment and national bands with their singers entertain the visitors late into the night.

Lagoa - Nearby Locations

The nearby town of Estombar has a history dating further back to when the Moors occupied the Algarve. It was the home of the famous 11th Century Arab poet "Ibn Ammar". Many local legends exist and there are reputed to be subterranean passages from near this town going inland for about 12 kms. to the ancient Moorish capital of Silves. Near to Estombar is an area named Sítio de Fontes that has for centuries been a popular swimming spot due to two freshwater springs that provide a small lagoon prior to joining the Rio Arade. The authorities have now created at this attractive area an open area for performing plays and general picnicking. To the south of the Lagoa is the once small fishing village of Carvoeiro that today is an area of expensive villas, comfortable holiday apartments and golf courses. To the east is the small and attractive village of Porches that dates from the Roman period. Unfortunately, the earthquake of 1755 destroyed the ancient castle and also the original parish church that is believed to date from the 16th Century. To the west of Lagoa on the edge of the Rio Arade opposite the town of Portimão is the small town of Ferragudo. Romantically said to have once been the home of local pirates this place has retained much of its Portuguese flavor and as yet it has not been too influenced by tourism. During the summer on weekend evenings the main square is filled with the sound of music and laughter as the locals and tourists dance the night away.

Lagoa Events

June - Semana Gastronomia Portuguesa
24th June - Feira de São João
August - Festa das Tasquinhas Algarvias
2nd Friday of August – Fatacil
8th September - Town Holidays

Useful Lagoa Telephone Numbers

Town Hall - 282 341 410
Emergency Treatment - 282 357 320

Useful Lagoa Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 55 Kms
Postal Code - 8400

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Luxury Villas in the Algarve

Silves History

This city was once the capital of the whole district and that was still referred to in the 19th Century as the “Kingdom of the Algarve”. So much history is attached to Silves and its surrounding area that only a book would do it justice! Standing proudly on a hill the origin of the town traces back to existing some 1,000 BC. Evidence shows that it was already a notable place in Roman times but it really became an important place during its occupation in the early 11th Century by the Moors. Giving it the name of Xelb, they constructed lavish palaces and it became the cultural centre of learning for the whole Iberian Peninsular although it was still fell under the mantle of Cordoda in Spain. They imported lions and other wild animals that are reputed to have roamed freely through exotic gardens under its Seville based powerful ruler Al-Mutamid. Born in Beja in 1040 he became at the tender age of 13 years old ruler of Silves until later when he moved to Spain. It is recorded that in 1189 there were over 15,000 inhabitants when the Knights of Santiago sacked the city with the assistance of the Anglo-Norman Crusaders. Under the control of the Portuguese Kings it continued in importance until its commerce began to decline in the 15th Century due the silting-up of the Rio Arade that gave the town access to the sea. A specialty of the town are the “Morgados” cakes made with pumpkin.

Silves Description

Most of the town and nearly all its ancient buildings were destroyed by the earthquake of 1755. The impressive remains of the castle dates back to Moors and there is a impressive underground water reservoir that is still used by the city today. It has the romantic name of “Cistern of the Enchanted Moorish Girl” and was said to be a principal factor in the fall of the town during its siege. The Museu Arqueológico has been constructed above the cistern and here a visitor will find exhibits of locally found objects included items from the Stone Age. As a reminder to the Romans occupation there is the Ponte Romana, a fine strong bridge over the Rio Arade below the city walls and rebuilt from the original in the 15th Century. The city’s earlier 13th Century Cathedral was built on the site of a Mosque and has suffered considerable alteration over the centuries. To the southwest side of the town is a modern statue celebrating the siege of 1189 in an appropriately named square, Largo dos Mártires, where it is suggested that the defending Moors were buried. Just to the northeast of the city is a fascinating 16th Century granite cross that is located beside the road to the north. The countryside around Silves is the biggest orange growing area in Portugal and other neighboring towns’ share in the economic benefits from this product. There has been a popular recent decision to site a new University in Silves to recreate its links with its past.

Silves - Nearby Locations

Another administrative and rural town named Lagoa is only 8 km to the south. To the southeast is the town of Alcantarilha whose main claim to fame is a chapel lined with hundreds of bones belonging to earlier inhabitants. Further to the south of Alcantarilha is the beach town of Armação de Pera with its long beautiful sandy beach. Lying to the north of the fertile valleys of Silves is an area of attractive forest covered hills that eventually lead up to the mountains of Monchique. The large national Dams of Arade and Foz are well worth visiting for the beauty of their natural setting.

Silves Events

July - Beer Festival
3rd Saturday & Sunday of August - Feira da Laranja
3rd Monday every month - Market Day
3rd September - Municipal Day
Postal Code – 8300

Useful Silves Telephone Numbers

Town Hall - 282 442 325
Fire Brigade - 282 322 666
Police - 282 442 414
Emergency Treatment - 282 440 020
Ambulance - 282 322 666
Tourist Office - 282 442 255

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Luxury Villas in the Algarve

Portimão History

It traces its origins back to a small trading port of the Phoenicians, Greeks and Carthaginians. Some historians have indicated that the place was originally the famous Portus Hannibalis named by the famous Roman general, Hannibal Barca. During the following Moorish occupation they renamed the place "Burj Munt". Located at the mouth of the River Arade it provides a natural harbor and has at times been known in its past as a home for smugglers and pirates. The river also provides the sea access to the up-river ancient City of Silves that was the capital of the Algarve during the Moorish occupation. At this time the place was named Porcimunt but later in 1504 it was recognized as a town and granted the name "Vila Nova de Portimão" and became part of the possessions of the Castelo Branco family until the 17th Century. Much later it was commonly renamed as Portimão and was extensively developed in the 19th Century to become one of the most important centers on the Algarve of the fishing and canning industry until the early 1980s when the recession drove the remaining factories out of business.

Portimão Description

The town with some 35,000 inhabitants is essentially commercially orientated and was the main shopping town of the whole Algarve during the 1970s and 1980s. The town church that is the last attractive building surviving in the town dates from 1476 but it has undergone many alterations as from 1717 onwards. The town council appears to have adopted a policy of demolishing architecturally interesting buildings in favour of modernization. Happily, it also has a very active cultural department and there are always different forms of events happening throughout the year. The Municipal Museum is housed in an old Sardine Canning Factory and here are held regular exhibitions cover art, history, and general culture, all of a local and national content. A boat marina was recently opened adjoining Praia da Rocha and adds the fascinating sight of the many boats at anchor and a further choice of bars and restaurants in which to pass the evening. When approaching the town from the direction of Faro there is a choice of two bridges to cross. The old one runs along past the harbor but we would recommend take the new bridge. It is so well balanced in design that it can be seriously considered among the most pleasing bridges to the sight built in Portugal in the 19th Century. On the river front near the square with the cafés many different boat tours and deep sea-fishing outings can be booked.

Portimão - Nearby Locations

In the Portimão area is Armação de Pera with a small 18th Century fortress and a popular location to tourists with its long sandy beach. The beach village of Alvor is another popular tourist location. Still maintaining its village character with its 16th Century Parish Church its small streets teem with life in the tourist season. The village of Carvoeiro is a small charming beach location that is now surrounded by comfortable self-catering villas. The tourist trade happily not yet overpowers the small delightful fishing village of Ferragudo, lying just across the river from Portimão. Slightly inland is Lagoa a small administrative town. Praia de Rocha and Praia de Vau both seriously devoted to offering tourist accommodation with the added attractions of good beaches and active nightlife. The inland city of Silves and its truly interesting historical background is worth a visit. Including in the many true stories are the battles between the Moors, the Crusaders, and the Portuguese. Unfortunately, the city was for the most part destroyed by the earthquake of 1755. The Moorish occupiers considered the city at the turn of the 11th Century as the centre of all true culture in the Iberian Peninsular. Near to the town of Portimão are several sites of interest such as the Caves of Estombar, the mosaic floor of the Roman villa at Figueira, and at Alcalar the recently well restored burial tombs from the Dolman period (around 3.500 BC).

Portimão Events

17th March - Feira de Alvor
April - Formula 1 Speed Boat Racing
3rd & 4th June - Feira de Sta. Catarina
July/August - Festival de Sardinha
3rd August - Feira das Melancias (Watermelon)
7th to 9th August - Feira de Portimão
7th of October - Feira de N. Sra. do Amparo

Useful Portimão Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8500
Town Hall - 282 416 416
Fire Brigade - 282 422 122
Police - 282 417 717
Hospital - 282 415 115
Emergency Treatment - 282 416 272
Ambulance - 282 412 122

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11th November - Feira of São Martinho

Tourist Office - 282 419 131

11th December - Feira da Cidade (Town Holiday)

Useful Portimão Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 67 Kms

Postal Code - 8500

Alvor History

Probably the Carthaginians founded Alvor and its history is interesting. It is said by some that it was really the site of “Portus Hannibalis”. The Romans gave it the name Ipses and it was considered an important port and was allowed to issue its own money. Its richness is confirmed by the ruins of a rich Roman villa located slightly inland from the now village. In the time of the Moors who first occupied the place in 716, they gave it the name of “Albur” and the town passed through both the Portuguese and Moors hands several times until 1250 when the Christians conquered it for the final time. King Dom João II, who is regarded as an outstanding Portuguese king, is recorded as dying in 1495 within the town walls from a prolonged illness. Most of the original town has been destroyed in the earthquakes of 1532 and 1755.

Alvor Description

Although this ancient coastal village is now a very popular holiday location the one-ended narrow streets have restrained the developers from changing too much. Many of these streets now boast bars with live music and different types of restaurants but leading off from these there are still memories of the older fishing village. In the area are a number of holiday resorts that feed these streets with tourists. The village is well located facing a natural lagoon opening onto the sea. There is a choice of a long open sandy beach or a number of small coves tucked under the cliffs. The attractive 16th Century Parish Church that seems the only building that survived the earthquake of 1755 and has a prime example in its main doorway of the great craftsmanship of the Manueline era of architecture.

Alvor - Nearby Locations

Places near to Alvor are the commercial town of Portimão, the famous popular beaches of Praia da Rocha and Praia da Vau, and the semi-nature reserve of Quinta da Rocha

Alvor Events

17th March - Festival de Alvor

May - International Festival of Cinema

Useful Alvor Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 73 km

Town Holidays - 11th December

Useful Alvor Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8500

Town Hall (Portimão) - 282 416 416

Fire Brigade (Portimão) - 282 422 122

Police (Portimão) - 282 417 217

General Hospital - 282 417 295

Private Hospital - 282 420 400

Emergency Treatment - 282 419 269

Ambulance - 282 422 122

Tourist Office - 282 457 523

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Monchique Description

The town of Monchique is with few exceptions happily untouched by the 20th Century invasion of tourism. It lies in the saddle created by the two high hills, Foia and Picota, the former reaching to 902 metres above sea level. As “mountain” people the world over the 10,000 inhabitants of this town have retained the rustic atmosphere with steep cobbled streets and small dark doorways containing various artisan trades. There is a very neglected 17th Century Franciscan monastery overlooking the town from which a visitor has a panoramic view over the beautiful countryside. The 16th Century Parish Church has excellent examples of Manueline craftsmanship around its doorway. The surrounding area flourishes on the production of cattle, pigs, cork and wood. Another important local product is the popular “medronho”, the name of a strong schnapps type of drink made from distilling the fruit from arbutus bushes. Foia and its sister mountain of Picota at 774 metres provide dramatic views of the coastal plain to the south and to the western Atlantic coast.

Monchique - Nearby Locations

Between Monchique and the town of Portimão is the village of Caldas de Monchique that was developed in Roman times as a Spa. Here a visitor can try the curing elements of the sulphur smelling hot spring water that emerges at a constant temperature of 32°C. There are two further hot spring sites one of which is to the south of Picota hidden in a valley. Its name is Fonte Santa and it is rumored to have special healing effects. Some people make annual visits and in its history some centuries ago it has been recorded as being visited by both the King of Portugal and the King of Italy. The two nearby villages of Alferce and Casais are both typical unspoilt locations reflecting the spirit of rural mountain life. The village of Marmeleite is to the west and located on the road that connects to the many sandy beaches on the western Atlantic coast. The small rural town of Aljezur with its hilltop 12th Century castle and its 14th Century parish church is further west on this same road.

Monchique Events

March - Feira dos Enchidas Tradicionais (Sausages)

Useful Monchique Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8550

Town Hall - 282 912 403

Fire Brigade - 282 912 115 / 911 000

Police - 282 912 629

Emergency Treatment - 282 912 288

Ambulance - 282 912 115

Tourist Office - 282 911 189

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Lagos Description

Essentially now an important tourist town there are still many architectural signs of its ancient past, even a building dating originally back to around 1445 and is recorded as being Europe's first building used as a slave-market. The walls of the town are in most parts remaining after areas of restoration. Attached to the famous 17th century "gold" church of Santo António there is a small museum of regional items, some of which are quite odd! There are several interesting statues erected to the famous past figures that are associated with the history of this town. None more controversial than the sculpture of Dom Sebastião standing in the main square in front of the Town Hall.

A more recently erected statue commemorates the Algarve's only Saint, São Gonçalo de Lagos who was born in 1360 and died in 1422 in Torres Vedras. Pope Pio VI raised him to Sainthood in 1778. The town's more recently constructed Marina presents a lovely picture and this harbour is the first sight a visitor has of Lagos. Besides the boats that find it convenient as a permanent mooring it is usually full of yachts passing through, to and from the Mediterranean. The municipal council has constructed a modern Cultural Centre in which various exhibitions and culturally related events are held during the year. In the Marina different boat tours and deep sea-fishing outings can be booked.

Lagos History

The Romans gave the name of "Lacobriga" to the town but its natural river port would indicate very much earlier occupation. It was captured from the Moors in 1189 but it was not until 1249 that it was finally claimed by Dom Afonso III and integrated into the kingdom of the Algarve. This historic town has played an important part in the story of discovery and conquering the rest of the world. It was from this very harbor that Vasco da Gama sailed in 1499 on his historic and epic discovery voyage. It was the capital of the Algarve from 1578 until 1756 and there remain several ancient buildings to testify to its historic glory. From its port maritime expeditions were embarked to discover the world at the orders of Prince Henry the Navigator. Also, the armada of 800 vessels led by the ill-fated heir to the throne Dom Sebastião embarked from Lagos in 1578 to capture the town of Ceuta in Morocco.

Lagos - Nearby Locations

Near to Lagos is a small beach village of Burgau. Across the river from Lagos is Meia Praia, a very long sandy beach sheltered from the north by a gentle slope dotted with comfortable villas. The once upon a time fishing village of Praia da Luz is now devoted to the quieter side of the tourist trade and residents from colder climates. Nearby the coastal village of Salema there are some small Roman ruins proving the existence of its past life. Vila do Bispo to the west of Lagos is a very small administrative town for the Sagres area that is the most south-west corner of Europe! The village of Sagres is a must for every visitor to the Algarve. It presents a very impressive dramatic sight of towering sheer cliffs being beaten by the weight of the vast Atlantic Ocean. It is from here that Prince Henry planned his epic shattering voyages. Cape Santo Vicente is the name given to this promontory.

Lagos Events

May - Feira Coral do Algarve (Choral)
29th and 30th July - Feira da Arte Doce (Sweets)
August - Feira da Gastronomia (Food)
15th August - Feira de N. Sra. Da Glória
12th October - Feira de Outubro
27th October - Feira de S. Gonçalo
22nd to 24th November - Feira Franca de Lagos

Useful Lagos Telephone Numbers

Town Hall - 282 762 055
Fire Brigade - 282 760 115
Police - 282 762 809
Hospital - 282 763 034
Emergency Treatment - 282 771 000
Ambulance - 282 760 115
Tourist Office - 282 763 031

Useful Lagos Facts

Distance from Faro Airport - 80 km
Postal Code - 8600
Town Holidays - 27th October

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Sagres History

This small town is close to the most southerly western point of Europe known as Cape St. Vincent. The legend of the martyr Saint Vincent is that his relics were mysteriously transported by ravens from the Holy Land to the Cape and subsequently guarded by them. In 1173 the ravens reputedly then moved the relics to Lisbon where they remain to this day. However, it is much more likely that they were moved to Lisboa upon the orders of Dom Afonso Henriques. Several naval engagements took place off the Cape; Admiral Tourville defeated Sir George Rooke in 1693; Admiral Rodney defeated the Spanish in 1780; Admiral Jervis with Nelson defeated the Spanish fleet in 1797. As Sagres is located on the south side of the Cape its natural protection from the western winds and rough seas lent itself to the building by Prince Henry the Navigator (Dom Afonso Henrique), of a fort in which to house his School devoted to Navigation and Exploration. He is also reputed to have created a shipbuilding yard in the small natural harbor. From 1419 until 1460 he devoted his time and the revenues of the Order of Christ into this project. Money was spent liberally in building the vessels known as the "Caravela" which was in time to prove so suitable for exploration. In 1427 Diogo da Silva first discovered the Azores Islands. Until 1434 no sailor was known to have sailed further south than the Cape Bojador on the west side of Africa. In this year, Gil Eanes from Lagos, conquered the Cape but it was not until 1488 that Bartolomeu Dias succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope. The actual home of the Prince was likely to have been at the nearby Cape St. Vincent close to the ruins of a 16th Century Monastery. Unfortunately, the famous English Admiral Drake recorded in his logbook that his men completely sacked this house in 1597.

Sagres Description

There is very little left from a historical point of view as the only items left from his original building is the small chapel of Nossa Senhora da Graça and reputedly the giant pebble wind compass, Rosa dos Ventos. The present walls surrounding the area are the remains of a 17th Century fort. At the nearby Cape St Vincent is an impressive lighthouse that can normally be visited. This lighthouse has provided the guiding beam that safely directs the hundreds of ships that pass the Cape every year from the inevitable destruction that would otherwise occur. The surrounding cliffs present a very impressive dramatic sight with their towering sheer height and at most times being beaten by the strength of the vast Atlantic Ocean. The local restaurants are renowned for their fish by the variety and freshness and it is common to see the local fishermen wedged in dramatic perches on the cliff face with the thundering sea many scores of feet below. Unfortunately, every year the lives of some of these enthusiastic fishermen are taken, usually by falling. It is interesting to note that area of Sagres enjoys its own mini-climate. There is very little vegetation, the ground being mainly rock, but in the area to the north of the town 25 different varieties of wild orchids have been found.

Sagres - Nearby Locations

The nearest town is Vila do Bispo that acts as the administrative center for the area and also houses a few good fish restaurants. In the 8th Century about one kilometer to the southwest of this town was the seat of a religious Order known as the Igreja de Corvo. Founded by Christians from Valencia seeking refuge from the persecution of the Spanish ruler Abderramão I, all visual traces have been removed in the course of time. However, in the immediate vicinity of their location are "megaliths" and other signs of ancient civilization dating back thousands of years. They were recorded by the Moors as being very rich and providing hospitality to all travelers regardless of their faith. From Sagres the traveler can either go north or back to the east. Along the south coast just to the east is the superb open beach of Martinhal that is popular with windsurfers. Further east are the small and unspoilt beaches of Ingrina and Zavial, whilst further on is the more developed beach of Salema. Just to the east of Vila do Bispo near the small village of Raposeira is the modest 13th Century Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe, reputed to have been often used by Dom Afonso Henrique in his religious devotion. The beaches immediately to the north of the Cape are more exposed to the winds and rollers of the Atlantic with quite dangerous offshore currents. Further to the north of Vila do Bispo is the open sandy beach of Bordeira. About two-thirds of the journey north to this beach is a turning left to the small village of Pedralva. The village is now nearly completely unoccupied but it shows to the traveler a fascinating architectural and social picture of how life was once in the Algarve.

Sagres Events

1st Friday of each month - Market Day

Useful Sagres Telephone Numbers

Postal Code - 8650

Town Hall - 282 639 105

Tourist Office - 282 624 873