



A family get-together in the central coast

Invite the whole family to get together for two days of fun in the coastal area of Portugal's Centre region.

Begin by taking your children to the castle in Santa Maria da Feira, that seems to have been taken right out of a fairy-tale. Let their imaginations run wild, inventing stories of princesses in distress and princes riding to the rescue on white horses. Then come down to earth and show them explanations for a wide array of scientific phenomena in a trip to the Visionarium, in Europarque. It's educational and great fun!

Continue to Ovar, where the whole town seems to be covered in azulejo tiles, and then on to Furadouro Beach, in order to breathe in the Atlantic air as the kids build sandcastles in the wet sand.

As you pass through Torreira, visit the São Jacinto Sand Dunes Nature Reserve and then head back to Aveiro. Once in the city, a boat trip on a "moliceiro" (seaweed dredging vessel) through the estuary's canals is a must for the whole family. Alternatively, go for a ride on a "buga" (bicycles provided by the Municipal Council). Why not spend the night in one of the hotels in Aveiro, such as the Meliá Ria or others offering views over the shimmering canals. And don't forget to let the children taste some of the sweet yellow pastries, "ovos moles", for which the city is also famous.

On your second day, in Ílhavo Maritime Museum, learn about the fishermen's arduous work in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. And then eat some fine fresh fish caught off the coast of the Praia de Mira. And for those who don't fancy fish... try some delicious suckling pig in Cantanhede.

In Coimbra, a trip through the Baixa zone and the Patio of the University Colleges is another tempting proposition. Don't miss the Chapel of São Miguel and the Joanina Library.

But the biggest surprise awaiting the kids is "Portugal dos Pequenitos": a unique park designed for children where they can playfully step in and out of houses built to their scale. From Lilliput to Ancient Rome, this short break can be rounded off in Conímbriga, wandering through the ruins of an Imperial Roman villa.



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Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Santa Maria da Feira
- Visionarium - Centro de Ciência do Europarque
- Aveiro
- Costa Nova
- Museu Marítimo de Ílhavo
- Coimbra



Points of interest along the Itinerary

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Suggestions

Aveiro invites

A famous Aveiro landmark, the immense lagoon at its centre known as the Ria, creates a tangible link between land and sea. Boats move up and down its channels and give the city its uniquely colourful atmosphere. You'll find a bustling ambience everywhere as you stroll through Aveiro's waterside districts, where the small houses, whitewashed or covered in decorative tiles, are reflected in the water.

Narrow streets, filled with the city's warm and hospitable inhabitants, lead you to simple but attractive little chapels, standing as symbols to local religious devotion. Brightly painted windows and flowers contrast with the black and white patterns of the stone pavements, creating a colourful scene. The sea and mountains acting as a backdrop to the city's pretty streets.

At the Aveiro fish market, an interesting iron structure, you get the sense of a city that has held on to its traditions despite recent development. Now contained within the walls of the former Franciscan monastery of Santo António you'll find the Infante Dom Pedro Municipal Park and Garden. Its lake and carefully planted landscaping provide a pleasant patch of green that is repeated in grassy areas and small brightly coloured gardens across the city.

When you've learnt about the city's history, discover its modern and dynamic side. The many different shops to be found in the new avenues are testament to the success of recent development. The University has also given Aveiro a rich and active cultural life, with many new and exciting leisure and entertainment venues opening to serve its students. Finally, to explore the city more fully, take a ride on a BUGA, one of the city's free bicycles, and discover Aveiro's many charms.

Family fun in Costa Nova

The Costa Nova coastline retains the traditional charms that have long attracted Portuguese families in summer. Magnificent and little known beaches lie between the golden dunes and the open blue seas, beginning at Costa Nova in the south and Torreira in the north.

Make sure you drop in on Barra, with its 19th century breakwater and lighthouse. Admire the famous houses finished in red and blue stripes before embarking for a trip on one of the seaweed-gathering vessels that still ply in the Aveiro estuary.

In both summer and winter you can take sailing or windsurfing lessons in the estuary itself, or there is an equestrian centre on the coast with horses available for lessons when required.

And for those interested in the local wildlife, the S. Jacinto Dune Nature Reserve includes a series of footpaths and observation points for bird watching.

Make sure you get an ice-cream cone for all the family from one of the famous old vans, and don't even think of leaving before trying some of the local sweet speciality, the sweet egg based 'ovos-moles de Aveiro'.

São Jacinto dunes

Sea, lagoon and sand dunes - enjoy the Beiras coastline and the Dunas de São Jacinto Nature Reserve. Follow the nature trails of the Dunas de São Jacinto Nature Reserve and enjoy a beautiful coastal landscape, with scenic forests and sand dunes stretching down to the sea. Watch migratory birds and other species in their native habitat.

The dunes of São Jacinto, an integral part of the ecosystem in the Beira Litoral region, are populated with ancient woodlands of resinous and broad-leaved trees, growing in small wetland areas and supporting much local wildlife.



The Reserve spreads over a large area between the sea and a lagoon and has been conserved to a high standard. The areas of woodland were planted over a century ago to protect inland areas from wind swept sand. You'll find observation posts strategically placed in areas of great natural beauty, to the delight of bird watchers who can observe all kinds of waterbirds sheltering and nesting in the lagoon.

At the Visitor Centre, you'll also find information on the environmental education activities organised by the Reserve.

Ílhavo and Vista Alegre

In a region constantly exposed to the wind and waves of the Atlantic Ocean, Ílhavo is a town with an interesting history and the home of some truly remarkable works of porcelain art.

The fame and prestige of Vista Alegre porcelain dates back a long way and has already spread globally. It's displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and decorates some of Europe's most famous royal houses. It's on sale to the public too.

Ílhavo is a town with close links to the sea, inhabited by people who are proud of their cod fishing past in the icy waters of Newfoundland. Deep in the heart of the town, Ílhavo's modest one-storey houses, hidden from the crowds on the shopping streets, display signs of the local maritime tradition. This contrasts with the many Art Nouveau villas that hark back to the region's golden age.

You can discover more about the town's centuries-old maritime history in the Museu Marítimo de Ílhavo.

The town's most famous landmark is the Vista Alegre porcelain factory, which is almost like another local museum. A place where history is seen in the exhibition of hundreds of pieces highlighting the evolution of porcelain and its growing popularity since 1824.

The chapel of Nossa Senhora da Penha de França is another curiosity that highlights the town's history. Admire its painted ceilings and the figurative late 17th-Century tiles, as well as the Renaissance tomb of the Bishop Dom Manuel de Moura.

'Students' Coimbra

The capital of the Beira Litoral region, Coimbra has a number of monuments, medieval churches and the most important library in Portugal in store for you. It is here where rare treasures and books unique to the world are kept, a vast range of knowledge safeguarded within them.

Coimbra, on the edge of the River Mondego, is waiting for you. The city's narrow streets, courtyards, medieval arches, flowering terraces, bars, cafés, galleries and bookstores are most lively during the academic year.

Start at the Arco de Almedina to discover this fascinating world of students. You'll come upon the medieval Sé Velha (Old Cathedral), considered to be the most beautiful Romanic monument in Portugal, and the Santa Cruz Church, founded by Portugal's first king, D. Afonso Henriques. Next to the Colégio de Santo Agostinho (the current Faculty of Psychology) you can see a nearly intact remnant of the city wall where, in the 16th century, the Torre de Anto (Anto Tower) and the Palácio de Sub Ripas (Sub Ripas Palace) were built.

After passing by the house where Eça de Queirós once lived, you'll come upon the Repúblicas da Alta area that renders Coimbra so unique.

The noteworthy ensemble of buildings comprising the University of Coimbra should not be missed. Here, you can visit some of the University's most precious treasures: the Biblioteca Joanina (the university library, now a national monument), the Capela de S. Miguel (Saint Michael's Chapel), the Via Latina, the Sala dos Capelos (Graduate's Hall), the Rectory, the Porta Férrea (Iron Gate) and the Archives. Schedule your visit now to be charmed by Coimbra's student-focused traditions.

Portugal for the little ones

Explore the whole country in just one day as you take the children to the Portuguese miniature exhibition. This precursor of the theme park is dedicated to the main architectural monuments of Portugal from the north to the south, and all built on a reduced scale!



Enjoy an ice-cream while you look at the map of the world - marked with the routes followed by the Portuguese navigators. Then travel through a part of our history connected with the Discoveries with exhibits dedicated to Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique, Timor, India and Brazil.

Have fun "jumping" from a typical Alentejo house to a manor-house from the Minho, or from a typical house in Trás-os-Montes to one in the Algarve. And don't miss the Costume, Naval and Furniture Museums, also composed of miniatures.

Why not round off the day with a visit to the Casa da Criança (Children's House) or the Casa das Missões (House of Missions)?



Useful contacts

Reserva Natural das Dunas de São Jacinto

Website : <http://www.icnf.pt/cn/ICNPportal/vPT2007-AP-DunasSJacinto/Visitar+Area+Protegida/Como+Chegar/> | <http://www.icnf.pt>

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