



The 4 elements

Sense the power of Nature's four elements in a 3-day itinerary across landscapes that have been preserved for many millennia. Water of the open sea and rivers, Air of startling purity, Fire whose power was manifested when the planet was first formed and Earth - a mixture of fertile ground and hard stone, that provides nourishment to mankind.

Our starting point is the peninsula of Peniche - once an island, that over time was joined to the mainland. Nearby, the picturesque village of Baleal, perched on a rocky outcrop, becomes an island at high tide when the sea submerges the sand banks - the only land connection to the village. Visit Cape Carvoeiro and appreciate the strength of the sea in the form of the rocks sculpted by erosion. In the distance, you can glimpse the Berlenga islands. Add a day to your itinerary and book a boat trip to the small archipelago - a nature reserve, where you'll discover a unique eco system. Walk along the trails that will lead you to grottoes, or beaches with crystalline waters and spectacular views.

Journey inland towards the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros Natural Park and be prepared to be amazed by the salt pans in the middle of the peaks, supplied by rock salt mines located in the mountain depths. The Salt Pans of Fonte da Bica, only 3 kms from Rio Maior, cover the ground with a white blanket of geometric shapes. Near to Alcanede, visit the Grotto of Algar do Pena, the largest subterranean chamber ever discovered in Portugal, and spend some time in the Interpretation Centre in order to discover how the water has moulded the complex formations of stalactites and stalagmites.

On the next day, travel to Alcobertas and see a dolmen that has been transformed into a chapel, one of the most important megalithic monuments of its kind in Europe. Continue to Vestiaria and appreciate the notable Manueline doorway of the Church of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda. In Valado dos Frades, discover the Roman villa of Parreitas whose foundation dates back to the Iron Age. Far older is the Jurassic belvedere in Alqueidão da Serra - an excellent spot to observe the entire region, including the silhouettes of the castle of Porto de Mós and the monastery of Batalha!

Mira de Aire, Santo António and Alvados are names of grottoes that may be visited in the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros Natural Park. If you have time visit them all, or choose one - but don't miss this opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the interior of the Earth, in this huge chalk massif. Above ground, another surprise awaits you. Near to Fátima, in the Galinha quarry, discover the footprints of dinosaurs who lived here around 175 million years ago. This is the longest sauropod trail ever discovered in the world.

For the third day we suggest some lush green landscapes. In the Paul do Boquilobo Nature Reserve, between lagoons, brooks and streams, follow the nature trails and observe the largest colony of white herons in the Iberian peninsular, amongst a total of around 200 different bird species to be found here. Continue to the Castelo de Bode Dam, one of the largest artificial lakes in Europe. Take a cruise and prepare to be amazed by the beauty of the many hidden recesses of this reservoir, as you fill your lungs with fresh air from the pine groves. Or if you prefer an adrenalin rush, practise some water sports and complete this itinerary with renewed spirits - as a result of this privileged contact with nature.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Cabo Carvoeiro

Peniche

Reserva Natural das Berlengas

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

Salinas da Fonte da Bica

Marinhas de Sal - RIO MAIOR

Parque Natural das Serras de Aire e Candeeiros

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

Miradouro Jurássico

Alqueidão da Serra
(PORTO DE MÓS)

Grutas de Santo António - Alvados

Tel. : +351 249 841 876
Fax : +351 244 449 430
Website : <http://www.grutassantoantonio.com>
E-mail : grutassantoantonio@iol.pt

Grutas de Mira de Aire

Tel. : +351 244 440 322
Fax : +351 244 449 888
Website : <http://www.grutasmiradaire.com>
E-mail : grutas.miradaire@iol.pt

Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Ajuda

Largo da Igreja Matriz
Vestiaría (ALCOBAÇA)

Villa Romana de Parreitas

Bárrio
(Alcobaça)
Tel. : +351 262 581 959

Reserva Natural do Paul do Boquilobo

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



Suggestions

In the heart of Portugal

The Berlengas Reserve

For the best of these islands, head to Praia do Carreiro do Mosteiro, renowned for its fabulous beaches and the S. João Baptista fortress and lighthouse.

Take a boat trip to appreciate the clear local waters and discover the countless coastal caves. One is called "Furado Grande" (Large Borehole) and runs from one side of the island to another, coming out in the "Cova de Sonho" bay.

For diving enthusiasts, the translucent waters Berlengas let you see clearly the marine fauna and flora, and perhaps discover one of the wrecks on this coast.

To get to this living "oceanarium", take the boat from Peniche, which along with Nazaré deserves a visit if only for its surviving trawling and fishing traditions.

Off Médão Grande, the waves attract surfers and bodyboarders from all around the world. And for more water sports, the pretty Óbidos Lagoon is popular for rowing, canoeing, sailing and windsurfing.

Close by, Foz do Arelho offers good quality cuisine featuring local fish, cockles and 'Lagoon caldeirada' fish stew. All to be washed down with a good local wine. For dessert, the recommendation has to be the rich egg 'trouxas de ovos', 'beijinho' meringues or 'Caldas cavaca' cracknel.

Fish & shellfish, Peniche

Off the wonderful Ericeira beach, with its royal connections, and the neighbouring Ribamar beach, or to the north in the Lourinhã region and with beaches such as Porto de Barcas leading the way, are the key shell fishing grounds.

Thus, for delicious fish, from the sardines of Peniche or any other similarly coal-grilled fish through to the rich flavours of a 'caldeirada' fish stew, this region is the place to be. From Peniche through to Foz do Arelho, there are molluscs aplenty with the Óbidos Lagoon providing particularly rich pickings. Search out the simple restaurants on the beaches around Lourinhã, where the shellfish is particularly excellent.

To accompany a meal or a snack, opt for one of the fine local wines such as those from Torres Vedras, Bombarral or Arruda dos Vinhos.

And that is just the fish beginnings to the delights of the local cuisine. Indeed, finish your tour in Óbidos, a wonderful walled medieval town, for a local ginginha cherry liqueur to round off a well spent day.

Leiria pine forest

In the midst of this rugged landscape with a great biodiversity, visit the caves of Mira de Aire, Alvados, Santo António and Moeda.

These mountains were first settled back in the Palaeolithic age. You can see prehistoric remains, such as cromlechs and dolmens, as well as traces of the Roman and Muslim civilisations. The Castro de Santa Marta, an interesting Iron Age settlement, is well worth a visit.



Don't miss a trip to the Donkey Reserve, close to the Caves of Santo António. Here, you can take a donkey ride through the mountains and relive the past.

In the area close to the park are the Moinhos da Pena, one of the largest groups of windmills in Portugal. Some have been converted into tourist accommodation and can well serve as the starting point for a country walk or a bike ride.

In the tiny village of Bairro, you will find the Pedreira do Galinha Palaeontological Deposit, classified as a Natural Monument. Here you will find roughly twenty dinosaur footprints, making this the world's longest such trail.

Pedreira do Galinha

Close to Fátima and Torres Novas lies the fossil bed of Pedreira do Galinha, which contains excellent examples of Sauropod footprints, herbivorous four-legged dinosaurs that lived in the region about 175 million years ago.

On the 60,000m² rock surface, a few hundred footprints organised into more than twenty trails, dating from the middle Jurassic period, can be found. Present-day continents were formed during this period. This is the longest known trail of Sauropod footprints on earth, and the footprints are an exceptionally well-preserved fossil of one of the largest animal species that ever lived. In the museum, you'll also find the largest nest of dinosaur eggs in the world.

The country's largest find of Jurassic fossil remains, and part of the beautiful Serras de Aire e Candeeiros Nature Park, this place is definitely worth a visit.

Pombal and Porto de Mós

Begin your journey at the Castelo de Porto de Mós. Rebuilt in the 13th century by D. Sancho, it was transformed in the 15th century into a unique fortified palace, its towers boasting green cupolas.

Before making your way to Pombal, take the time to discover the region's glass and crystal work (an art with more than 250 years of history in this area) by visiting the Glass Route. You just might take a piece home with you.

In Pombal, make your way up to the castle. Founded by the Master of the Knights Templar, Gualdim Pais, in the 12th century, the castle once represented the dividing line between the lands re-conquered by the Christians and those still in the possession of the Moors. Later on, in the 16th century, D. Manuel ordered it to be rebuilt, with symbols of the king – the armillary sphere, the double window and the royal arms – still visible today.



Useful contacts

Posto de Turismo - Peniche

Rua Alexandre Herculano
2520-676 Peniche
Tel. : +351 262 789 571
Fax : +351 262 789 571
Website : www.cm-peniche.pt
E-mail : turismo@cm-peniche.pt

Posto de Turismo - Rio Maior

Casa Senhorial El-Rei D. Miguel
2040-320 Rio Maior
Tel. : +351 243 999 300
Fax : +351 243 999 388
Website : www.cm-riomaior.pt
E-mail : cmriomaior@mail.telepac.pt

Posto de Turismo - Porto de Mós

Jardim Público
2480-300 Porto de Mós
Tel. : +351 244 491 323
Website : www.rt-leiriafatima.pt
E-mail : pit-portomos@rt-leiriafatima.pt

Posto de Turismo - Ourém

Rua Beato Simões Lopes - N. Sr^ª. das Misericórdias -
Castelos de Ourém
2490-473 Ourém
Tel. : +351 249 544 654
Website : www.rt-leiriafatima.pt
E-mail : info@rt-leiriafatima.pt

Posto de Turismo - Torres Novas

Largo dos Combatentes, nº 4 e 5
2350-437 Torres Novas
Tel. : +351 249 813 019
Fax : +351 249 811 696
Website : www.cm-torresnovas.pt
E-mail : turismo@cm-torresnovas.pt

Posto de Turismo - Tomar

Av^ª. Dr. Cândido Madureira
2300-531 Tomar
Tel. : +351 249 329 823
Fax : +351 249 322 427
Website : www.cm-tomar.pt
E-mail : turismo@cm-tomar.pt