



Five viewpoints to the south of the river

Not very far from the centre of Lisbon, the area to the south of the River Tagus has many little nooks and crannies of incomparable beauty and romanticism, ideal for those in love.

Follow our suggested tour and give full vent to your passion.

On a sunny day, cross over the Ponte 25 de Abril and head for Sesimbra. As you drive across the bridge, you will be afforded a magnificent view over the Tagus and a glimpse of the special light that spreads across the estuary and on to the horizon. Before driving down to Sesimbra, continue along the road to Cabo Espichel. Proudly and faithfully standing guard at this isolated headland is the Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora do Cabo (Our Lady of the Cape). It is a place of peaceful refuge, inviting you to spend some time with your partner, contemplating the view over the sea and the protected landscape of the Fossil Cliff of Costa da Caparica from an improvised balcony in the Capela da Memória.

This special romantic trip for you and your partner offers you a series of pictures of the Atlantic that will remain forever engraved upon your memory. Discover an entirely new panorama by making your way up to Sesimbra Castle, from where you can enjoy a view over the whole of the bay, with the fishing boats adding even more colour to the horizon.

Move a little closer to the sea by driving down to the seaside village of Portinho da Arrábida. In the very heart of Arrábida Natural Park, take some time to enjoy a long walk along the beach. From here, you can even walk all the way to the beaches of Galapos and Figueirinha: a trip that is well worth the effort. Next, head on to Vila Nogueira de Azeitão, a region that is well known for its vineyards and wine production, where you can taste some of the local wines in one of the region's famous cellars, remembering to propose a toast to this exciting and romantic day.

Don't return to Lisbon, however, without first passing through Setúbal. From the Pousada de São Filipe, there is an excellent view over the Sado Estuary Nature Reserve, and, at Palmela, you have the chance to enjoy the sight of a truly glorious sunset from the castle tower.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Cabo Espichel
- Sesimbra
- Praia do Portinho da Arrábida
- Parque Natural da Arrábida
- Azeitão
- Castelo de Palmela



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Cabo Espichel

Cabo Espichel

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Parque Natural da Arrábida

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

Castelo de Palmela

Palmela



Suggestions

Arrábida for lovers

The Arrábida Nature Reserve is ideal for a romantic getaway. Enjoy some gentle walking in the National Park, or some late afternoon reading in the warmth of the São Filipe Fort esplanade in Setúbal. Join in with the medieval nights held here in summer, or have a romantic dinner by the seaside accompanied by an excellent local wine.

The huge expanse of the Arrábida National Park, less than 50 kilometres from Lisbon, is perfect for unhurried walks. Rest on the highest cliff on the Portuguese coastline and take in the unforgettable views over the Atlantic.

And for more of a challenge, take to the clear waters off the beaches at the foot of the Arrábida hills, or even try some sea canoeing.

Be sure to include time to visit Vila Nogueira de Azeitão, just 15 minutes by car from Setúbal. Explore its historic and artistic heritage.

And make sure you try some of the excellent local produce, including the Azeitão 'torta' sweet rolls and the fine cheeses and Muscatel wine.

Castles south of Lisboa

Many fortifications remain to mark Portugal's foundation and military history. Palmela, Sesimbra and Setúbal castles have since become prominent features of the Costa Azul.

Palmela Castle stands on the last outcrop of the Serra da Arrábida, from where you can look out over the vast plain from Sines to Sintra. Today it is the home of an extremely beautiful Pousada. All that now remains of the castle's original Roman foundation is the circular towers; the square towers have been attributed to the Arabs, whereas the keep is attributed to the Master of Avis. The modern fortifications, which were used as defence for cannon fire, are the work of Dom Pedro II.

Situated close to Setúbal, the Fortaleza de São Filipe enjoys a privileged position at the mouth of the River Sado. Overlooking the scenic beaches of the Tróia Peninsula, the mountains of Serra da Arrábida act as its backdrop. It is the work of the Italian architect Filipe Terzio and was built at the orders of King Filipe II to protect the entrance to the Sado estuary. Nowadays, it is also a Pousada.

Sesimbra Castle, built in 1200, dominates the whole of the bay. With an irregular-shaped ground plan, and adapted to the contours of the hill on which it was built, it consists of a citadel with a keep, cistern and extensive high walls, reinforced with a watchtower and sloping bulwarks.

Make sure you find some time to visit these fortifications, each of them just a stone's throw from Lisbon. They offer fascinating architecture, plus stunning views of their respective regions.

Sado Estuary

There are 50.000 hectares of protected areas including the Serra da Arrábida Natural Park and the wetlands of the Tagus and the Sado estuary.

This coastline has white, sandy beaches running for kilometres and flanked by dunes and cliffs.

Further to the south, experience the grandiose beauty of the Serra da Arrábida hills rising from beaches to the natural park. It quickly becomes clear why the Franciscan monks established their monastery here.

For nature and conservation enthusiasts, this region is wonderful. It includes two important estuary habitats, those of the Sado and the Tagus rivers with their wetlands home to diverse wildlife and an important ecological heritage. These habitats are perfect for various types of fish, migratory birds



and unusual but characteristic agricultural traditions.

Take a cruise on the Sado and meet one of the region's great attractions, the school of dolphins, and a species unique to Portugal.

Enjoy the sandy, ocean beaches and calm seas of the Costa Azul and take a swim alongside these gracious mammals.

Beaches of Arrábida

At Arrábida, the point where the mountains meet the sea has given rise to a string of small, welcoming beaches. The sea here is green and blue, and in spite of the vast expanse of ocean that you'll find in front of you, it has almost no waves at all.

Portinho da Arrábida is one of the most beautiful of these beaches, a bay with extremely white sand, framed by the green of the mountains. This is just one of the beaches of the Serra da Arrábida Natural Park, where many rare and very ancient plant species are to be found amidst the splendour of the vegetation.

At the beach, dive into the sea and explore the immense wealth of unique fauna and flora hidden in the clear water around the Pedra da Anixa, just as many other divers from all over the world have done. And, as the day draws to a close, when the sun begins to disappear behind the mountain ridge, you'll feel like enjoying a stew of the fine, locally caught fish or some of the subtly-flavoured red mullet from Setúbal, accompanied by one of the region's excellent white wines.

Beaches of Tróia

The beaches of Tróia are kilometre after kilometre of white sand gently lapped by the sea. Along the coastal road, or on the dunes, all the way between the beaches of Comporta and Pego, it's easy to find a pleasant restaurant in which to enjoy a meal of tasty fresh fish.

And you only have to travel a few kilometres to change the scenery. At Praia da Galé, for instance, the line of dunes is interrupted, giving way to a five million-year-old cliff that stretches all the way to Melides.

If you enjoy playing volleyball, football or rugby, you'll find the goalposts and nets already set up for you on the beach of Tróia-Mar, close to the ferry that connects the Tróia peninsula to the city of Setúbal. It's well worth taking the short ride across this narrow gateway between the mouth of the Sado estuary and the Atlantic Ocean. You may even be lucky enough to see some friendly dolphins swimming beside your boat.

Further inland are the cork and holm oak groves, pinewoods, and the undulating carpet of rice paddies that form part of the Sado Estuary Nature Reserve, where families of birds come to build their nests and spend the winter.

Azeitão: typical tastes

Let us begin with a starter: Azeitão cheese or cockles. For the main dish, choose a fish and shellfish soup or a fillet of 'espadarte' swordfish, a 'caldeirada' fish stew or a bread and eel 'ensopado de enguias'. Or opt for any one of the freshly grilled fish before moving onto dessert of 'torta' sweet rolls and a few 'beijinhos de Azeitão' meringues.

And naturally all such specialities come with an appropriate recommendation for one of the locally produced white or red wines or liqueurs. The Península de Setúbal/Costa Azul Wine Route takes you to wine producers from across Azeitão, Palmela and the surrounding area. And wine tasting is put on at the Pousada de Palmela country hotel or the Casa Mãe, a former wine cellar converted by the Wine Route into the Palmela centre for tasting and reception.

Bring your visit to a close in the best possible fashion with a Setúbal Moscatel. We are certain that you will appreciate the beauty of this region just as much as our suggestions here.



Useful contacts

Paisagem Protegida da Arriba Fóssil da Costa de Caparica

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

Castelo de Sesimbra

Sesimbra

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