

Complete rest and relaxation in the Algarve

Leave the beach behind and spend a completely different kind of day at some of the most stress-free places in the Algarve.

Take a break from your holiday routine and enjoy a stroll along the footpaths and trails of the Serra de Monchique. In the midst of some lush green vegetation, you will find the Parque das Termas, a most restful park designed in the style of the 1920s. Walk around the park and discover a haven of genuine peace and quiet, far removed from the hustle and bustle that you typically find along the coast, and let yourself become immersed in the sound of silence.

In Silves, make sure to spend some time wandering around and browsing in the local craft shops, where you will find some quite unique examples of basket weaving and copper articles. Take a break from your diet and indulge yourself by sampling one of the local sweets, based on almonds and dry figs.

Further deepen your sense of well-being by enjoying a little escape to a spa or a thalassotherapy centre, close to Lagoa and Portimão. Visit, for example, the Sofitel Thalassa, Vilalara, located in a perfectly idyllic setting, different from anything you have ever seen before.

If, even so, you still can't resist a visit to the beach, choose one of the most beautiful ones in this region – Vau, Alvor or Três Irmãos – and enjoy a refreshing dip in the sea before lunch. As you contemplate the sea, let your thoughts run free while you dry.

And, whatever you do, don't miss the chance to sample the local shellfish or one of the dishes cooked in the special copper pan known as the "cataplana" at one of Lagos's many restaurants, and afterwards help your digestion by walking it off with a stroll through the city centre. Take advantage of your being here to appreciate the outstanding beauty of the coast, by taking a boat trip along the rocky coastline to the caves of Ponta da Piedade.

Round off your day with a visit to Sagres, where you should see a glorious sunset from the headland and then go and settle in for a most relaxing night in the romantic atmosphere of the Pousada do Infante. If you wish to prolong this trip even further, then we suggest that you head on to the Costa Vicentina Natural Park – beginning after Vila do Bispo – where you will discover a completely different coastline, with its dream-like beaches nestling amidst the rocks, filled with the foam of the relentless waves.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Silves
- Praia da Marinha
- Praia do Alvor
- Praia de Dona Ana
- Sagres
- Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina



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Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina

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

Suggestions

Monchique spa

Located in a green valley of the Serra de Monchique hills, this spa is a paradisiacal refuge off the beaten track in the Algarve.

The waters of the Serra have been used since Roman times as a treatment for bodily and spiritual fatigue. The Romans called them the 'sacred waters'.

This is the Algarve with a difference - a peaceful and calm environment that will give you the rest you so cherish.

Make full use of the lush surroundings to explore the interior of the Algarve. With its traditional architecture and gardens full of fruit trees and hydrangeas, it is particularly worth a visit.

The nearby town of Silves, once the Moorish capital of the region is worth a visit for its fabulous castle of red sandstone.

Thalassotherapy, Algarve

Add something extra to your holiday and try out some of the health and beauty programmes on offer at the Algarve's Thalassotherapy centres.

Located by the sea, these centres at popular resorts offer seawater-based treatments to aid relaxation and restore your physical balance.

Seaweed, mud and sand combine to ensure a healthy skin and complexion at the Vilalara Thalassotherapy Centre. Tone your whole body with a "Cura Adelgaçante", or go for smoother legs with a "Cura Pernas Tonificadas" treatment.

A range of recreational activities is available to complement the pampering. Golf is just one activity on offer, with numerous high quality courses located across the Algarve region.

There is also some fine dining on offer. For example, for a delicious treat you can sample any of the grilled fish or fresh shellfish served at a restaurant with a beautiful view over the sea.

Visit Lagos

During the Voyages of Discovery, Prince Henry the Navigator would restock his caravels here as they set out to prove the world did not end at Cabo Bojador. King Sebastião made it the capital of the Algarve, a position it maintained through to 1755. And it was from Lagos that king Sebastião set out to conquer North Africa, an expedition that was to prove historically disastrous for Portugal. From the Manueline window set into the Governor's Castle, he was to address his troops for the final time. In the Gil Eanes Square, the sculptor João Cutileiro managed to embody the wild dreams of this adolescent king.

In its churches, museums and bustling squares, Lagos reveals its ties with the sea. On either side of the centre stand two testimonies to very different times. There is the Ponta da Bandeira Fortress, built to impose respect among the corsairs that plagued the region and now home to a museum dedicated to the Discoveries. At the other extreme, there is the Marina, a meeting point with all the people and bars for a lively late afternoon drink.

The first slave market of Europe was held under the arcades of the Infante D. Henrique square. The site is now the place to be for the best in local handicrafts.

Amidst the abundant profusion of gold leaf carving and tiles of the church of Santo António, pick out the Lieutenant-general portrait following the "promotion" that king Pedro II bestowed upon himself.



Right by the city, enjoy the charm of these rock-enclosed beaches and the seafront restaurants with their menus featuring the pick of the sea's produce. A great suggestion for a great few days.

Spas in the West Algarve

Now and again we all need to take a break from our daily routine. Enjoy the Mediterranean climate and privileged oceanside location of this part of the Algarve to spend a few peaceful days dedicated to your own wellness.

Perfectly integrated in the surrounding countryside, the resorts in the Western Algarve offer several treatment centres equipped with all the latest facilities to provide moments of pure relaxation for those who like to be pampered. In addition to conventional treatments, you can also try methods inspired by traditional and oriental medicine. Why not try the alternative therapies at the Parque da Floresta spa or simply immerse yourself in the goodness of the 'Cleopatra Baths' at the Hotel Vila Vita Parc.

Close by are the towns of Lagos and Sagres, from where the Portuguese first set sail on their voyages of discovery. In the peaceful surroundings of the Serra de Monchique hills, you'll find a spa complex, whose healing waters that are ideal for medicinal and beauty treatments were favoured by the Romans. Round off your day with a refreshing swim in the Atlantic at Marinha Beach.

Golf in the Lagos region

It was in this Region that the visionary Sir Henry Cotton designed the first golf course in an old rice field - the Penina, today an international standard.

In Lagos, next to one of the best beaches in the Algarve, Praia da Luz, the landscape of the Boavista golf course includes regional species like the almond tree and carob tree, with excellent views of the sea and the Serra de Monchique mountains.

The Palmares course, the scene of the oldest amateur tournament - the Almond Blossom Tournament played since 1977, has two different landscapes: some of the holes are by the sea, others offer spectacular views over the Bay of Lagos, and the rest face the Serra de Monchique.

Part of the Le Meridien Penina tourist resort, it is one course of 18 holes and two courses of 9 holes. It was on this course that Sir Henry Cotton used to play, using a donkey he christened 'Pacifico' as a caddie.

On the shore or inland, flat or hilly, choices abound. Each of the golf courses in this region will give you several birdies and eagles and, who knows, maybe a hole-in-one.

Sailing Portimão

Portimão, a typical Algarve town, is a seaside resort renowned for its excellent long, sandy beaches and warm, calm waters. To restore your energy, stretch out your towel in the sunshine of Praia da Rocha, and cool off with a cocktail in an open-air café by the sea. You'll soon feel reinvigorated.

In Portimão, you'll find the conditions are perfect for a sailing adventure off the Algarve coast. Hidden by the impressive cliff of Praia da Rocha lies the Portimão Marina, which has sophisticated modern facilities that for planning your trip.

Hire a boat and discover the unspoilt sands between dunes and cliffs that are inaccessible by land. And why not take a swim in the clear waters? Take your time to discover the riches of the jagged coastline, with its grottos and caves dug into giant rocks. Or why not go fishing, another great way to enjoy these thriving, deep waters.

Get in touch with nature and explore the countryside of the Algarve, by going up the River Arade to the historical town of Silves. Back in Portimão, you'll appreciate the picturesque beauty of the town which is built on a cliff top facing the sea and which is especially beautiful when lit up at night time.



Seek out a restaurant with traditional cuisine, taste the delicious regional fish and shellfish dishes and enter into the hectic spirit of a night in the numerous bars and discothèques.

You can always stop off and acquaint yourself the other marinas on the Algarve coast, choosing between the cosmopolitan marina at Vilamoura or the sophisticated facilities at Lagos and Albufeira.

Useful contacts

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