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## Parque Natural da Ria Formosa

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### ABOUT



A humid zone of international importance, the Ria Formosa estuary is a labyrinth of canals, islands, marshland and sandy beaches that extend 60 km along the Algarve coast between the beaches of Garrão and Manta Rota.

This diversity of eco-systems attracts a varied range of animal life including many bird species. One of the rarest species is the purple swamphen, the symbol of their Natural Park that cannot be found in any other part of the country. Visitors who would like to admire the elegant plumage of this bird and learn everything about the protected area, should start their visit in the Marim Environmental Education Centre, that will indicate the most appropriate pedestrian trails and observatories where it is possible to spy on the day-to-day activities of the various species. The Park also organises various rides in a traditional boat that was formerly used for tuna fishing.

One of the most friendly species that can be found here is the Portuguese water dog. This is a long-haired dog, which helps fishermen in their work, by diving and catching fish caught in the nets.

Other traditional activities of the local population living in the estuary area include extraction of salt and gathering of shellfish and bivalves (mussels, oysters, clams, razor etc). These are then used with great skill and art in order to create delicious gastronomical specialities, such as fish soup or razor fish rice, that can be enjoyed calmly in the seaside restaurants.

All those who love the sun and sea, will encounter genuine paradises in the islands located in the Ria Formosa estuary. From west to east, we find the islands of Faro, Barreta, Culatra, Armona and Tavira, with extensive stretches of sand and relatively deserted. In order to round off the trip, it's well worth visiting Cacela Velha, a white town with a notable historical heritage. From the top of the fortress, there are spectacular views of the surroundings - mingling together the blue tones of the estuary, sea and sky.

### Contacts

#### Head-office:

Centro de Educação Ambiental de Marim - Quelfes  
8700-225 OLHÃO  
Phone: +351 289 704 134 /5 - Fax: +351 289 704 165  
E-mail: pnr@icnf.pt

Website: <http://www.natural.pt/portal/pt/AreaProtegida/Item/14>  
<http://www.natural.pt/portal/en/AreaProtegida/Item/14>

**Characteristics and Services**

Signposted routes

Park area: 17.664 ha.

Altitude: Máx - 26m; min - 0m

Accommodation facilities available

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