
Portimão

ABOUT



Photo: Câmara Municipal de Portimão

Portimão

Located in the estuary of the River Arade, Portimão is known for its excellent sandy beaches with plenty of warm, calm waters, which make it a very alluring holiday destination.

Portimão has a long fishing tradition that developed particularly between the 19th and 20th centuries with the advent of the canning industry and tourism. Most of the buildings that you see in the streets and squares of the historic centre are from this period, as well as the building that houses the **Portimão Museum**, a superb refurbishment of an old cannery that received the Museum of the Year award from the Council of Europe in 2010. It pays homage to the people and the city that for centuries have lived exclusively of and for the sea.

You shouldn't miss the simply styled **Chapel of São José de Alcalar** or the impressive **Church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição** (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception), built in the 15th century on top of a hill, and standing out in the city's skyline; it was badly damaged by the 1755 earthquake, but retains its beautiful original Gothic portal. For a break in your meanderings, it's best to rest in the shade of the trees of the Manuel Bivar Garden to see the fishing boats and pleasure craft sail past. Or on the promenade beside the **Marina**, one of the liveliest parts of the city both by day and by night.

Most of the restaurants, where you will find **grilled sardines**, the favourite local dish, are on the waterfront, next to the docks. Although sardines are eaten throughout the region and indeed across the country, they are particularly famous in Portimão and have a festival in their honour in August. But there are many other fish and seafood specialties to try, such as clams, whelk bean stew, casseroles and bouillabaisse. Broad beans, cornmeal (a kind of polenta) and the traditional almond- and fig-based sweets of the region are a few more in the wide range of ingredients on offer.

Praia da Rocha, about 3 kilometres from the centre, is perhaps the best known beach in the Algarve, with the picture postcard scene of its huge swathe of sand being widespread internationally. It's been a busy seaside resort since the beginning of the 20th century, and it has a casino and offers an endless number of leisure activities. It also had great strategic importance in the 15th century. It was here that the **Fortress of Santa Catarina de Ribamar** was built to defend the harbour and the population from attacks by pirates, providing crossfire with the São João do Arade Fort, right in front in Ferragudo, alongside another extensive sandy beach aptly called Praia Grande.

The Praia da Rocha Fortress provides today an excellent view over the city, the river and the sea, which acquires a special charm in the evening, in the light of the setting sun. From here you can also catch sight of some of the beaches to the west, beginning with the **Três Castelos Beach**. Some smaller, others larger, but always framed by jagged rocks that embellish the landscape, here you'll find **Careanos, Vau, Barranco das Canas, João d'Arens,**

Praia and Três Irmãos beaches. This sequence ends at the long sandy beach of **Praia do Alvor** and its estuary, an area of lagoons important for aquatic bird watching.

But to get a complete view of the Portimão area, you must look at it from all perspectives. For example, take a **boat trip along the coast** to discover beaches inaccessible by land and admire the rock formations. And those who are fans of game fishing will find this the ideal destination, because this fertile sea abounds in large species such as swordfish. To enjoy other landscapes, you can go up the estuary of the River Arade to Silves, passing between green hills. Along a short distance, you'll find a varied range of images that will stay etched in your memory.

NEARBY

Just six kilometres from Portimão, this fishing village retains its charm in its streets of whitewashed houses and its colourful boats, and there's also many restaurants and a lively nightlife.

At the highest point there are still some remnants of the castle walls, but the highlights are the Parish Church, with a highly decorated 16th century portico and the panorama seen from the churchyard over the sea and the estuary, an area of lagoons visited by migratory birds, which is particularly charming at dawn, when absolute tranquillity reigns.

USEFUL INFORMATION

The urban route "Vai e Vem" (<https://www.cm-portimao.pt/>) provides a connection by bus between various points in the city and the beaches.

GETTING HERE

By road:

- From the North: A2 - Autoestrada do Sul (exit at the last toll at Paderne) or the IC1 if you want to avoid the motorway, and follow signs to Portimão.
- if you are already in the Algarve: A22 - Via do Infante or the EN125

By rail: the railway station is in Largo Sárra Prado, close to the city centre.

By coach: www.rede-expressos.pt e www.eva-bus.com also with links to other places in the Algarve;

By air: The Algarve International Airport in Faro is about 66 km away;

By sea: Portimão has a marina and a cruise ship harbour that provide excellent conditions for all who arrive by sea.