Marinas and Yacht Harbours

ABOUT

Photo: Turismo do Estoril

Marinas and Yacht Harbours

Moorings in a safe harbour are always available to anyone cruising along the Portuguese coast. From north to south and on the islands of Madeira and the Azores, there are many marinas and yacht harbours equipped with all the services required to welcome those arriving by sea.

In the 15th and 16th centuries it was at sea that the Portuguese explorers found the seaways that led them to other cultures in distant lands, and they were the first Europeans to reach the Far East and Brazil.

Nowadays, Portugal’s mild climate and abundance of sunshine throughout the year offer excellent conditions for enjoying the ocean, cruising or practising various water sports, and you are sure to find the support and facilities ashore that you need. These facilities are available at the Marinas and Yacht Harbours, many of which have been awarded the European Blue Flag which guarantees their excellent conditions with regard to the quality of water, environmental management, safety and services.

Following the coastline from north to south, you first encounter the Marina at Viana do Castelo which, lying at the mouth of the River Lima, is the gateway to the green Minho region. A little further south are two marinas – at Póvoa do Varzim, a very busy summer resort, and the Porto Atlântico Marina, in Leixões, close to Porto, the country’s second largest city. If you would like to venture into the interior, you can choose the marinas and docks of the River Douro, the region which produces the famous Port wine, an "explorer" itself, since it reaches every part of the world.

In the Centro de Portugal, there is the Barra Lighthouse, the tallest in the country and a reference point for sailors. But there are also several places to drop anchor – Carregal, near Ovar; Torreira and Figueira da Foz, a charming, traditional seaside resort. Further south, Nazaré and Peniche, both famous for their fishing traditions and for the waves that attract surfers from around the world, also offer safe havens.

In the Lisbon area, those arriving by sea have many options, from the Estoril coast, with Cascais Marina and the yacht harbour at Oeiras, to the Parque das Nações Marina in the far east of the city. The Docks area - Alcântara, Santo Amaro, Belém and Bom Sucesso - was converted in the 1990s, and is now the centre of a vibrant nightlife, with restaurants, bars and nightclubs that attract many people.

Across the River Tagus, near the Arrábida Natural Park, the yacht harbour at Sesimbra is a great base from which to set off to discover some small coves and deserted beaches. Similarly, from the Fontaínhas Docks in Setúbal and Troia Marina, you can cast off to go in search of the many dolphins. Further south, Sines serves as a port of call for anyone wanting to go to the Algarve, because it’s already halfway there. And in the interior of the Alentejo, Amieira Marina provides support services for those sailing on the great Alqueva lake. Here, you can even rent a houseboat to relax

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on and cruise around.

There’s a succession of places to moor safely along the Algarve coast. Vilamoura, the oldest marina in the country, is in the most central area and is a great entertainment centre. But from west to east, Lagos, Portimão, Albufeira, Faro, Olhão, Tavira and Vila Real de Santo António also have their ports and marinas that rival each other in terms of quality.

Out in the Atlantic, in the archipelagoes of Madeira and the Azores, important as ports of call during the Portuguese maritime expansion in the 16th century, sea connections provide the main transportation between the islands. In Madeira, in addition to its Marina, the cosmopolitan city of Funchal has one of the country’s main cruise ports and receives yachts and liners from all over the world. But there are other places in the region to moor, such as Quinta do Lorde and the island of Porto Santo, famous for its long expanse of golden sand.

In the Azores, Horta Marina, a mecca for those crossing the Atlantic, is well known for its "sea dogs" who leave its walls full of drawings and paintings, making it one of the most colourful in the world. There are also places to drop anchor on the other islands, such as Terceira – in Angra and Praia da Vitória – and São Miguel - Ponta Delgada and Vila Franca do Campo, where you can safely leave your boat to set out on terra firma to discover the stunning beauty of these magical islands.

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