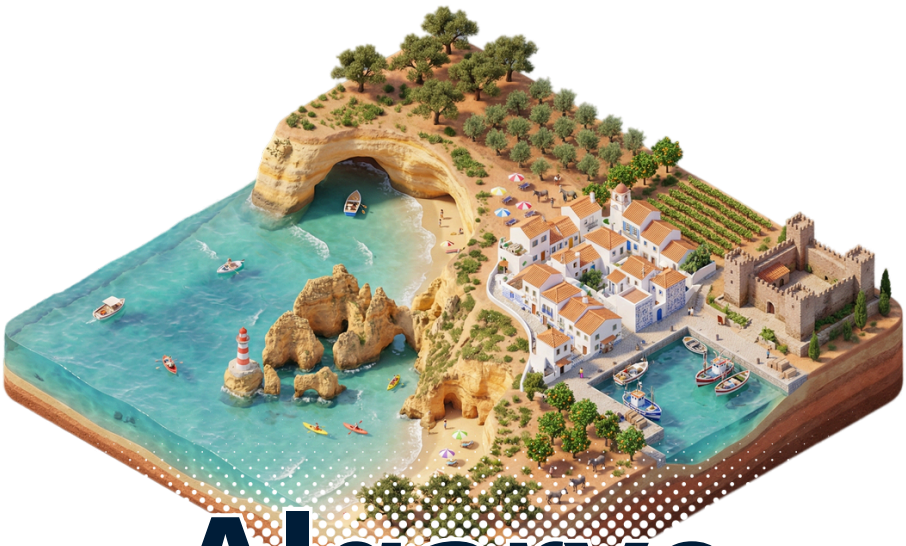


Algarve

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

The Algarve is Portugal's southern coast and its main beach region. It has golden cliffs, sea caves and rock arches in the west, and long sandy islands and a lagoon in the east. The wild Atlantic coast in the southwest is a different world, with big surf and few buildings.

It suits beach holidays, families, walkers and anyone who wants sun outside the summer months. Most visitors base themselves in one or two towns and use day trips to see the rest. Faro is the regional capital and the gateway. Lagos and Albufeira are the best-known resort bases.

When to visit

April to June and September to October are the best months. The weather is warm and dry, and the crowds are smaller. July and August are hot, busy and the most expensive. The sea breeze cools the coast, but the hills inland are hotter. The Atlantic stays cool, and the west coast is colder and windier than the south coast. Winter is mild but wetter, and some seasonal businesses close.

A major annual event is the Silves Medieval Fair in August. It runs for more than a week, with parades, markets and banquets in the castle town of Silves.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for wildlife watching	16° / 18° Feels like 12°	10° / 6°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	16° / 19° Feels like 13°	10° / 7°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	18° / 22° Feels like 15°	12° / 8°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	20° / 24°	13° / 10°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 28°	15° / 12°	22 sunny days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	18° / 15°	23 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for the beach	29° / 33°	20° / 17°	28 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	29° / 33°	21° / 18°	28 sunny days · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 30°	19° / 16°	23 sunny days
October	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 27°	17° / 13°	
November	Great Great for hiking	19° / 22°	13° / 9°	Dry air
December	Great Great for wildlife watching	16° / 19° Feels like 13°	11° / 7°	Dry air

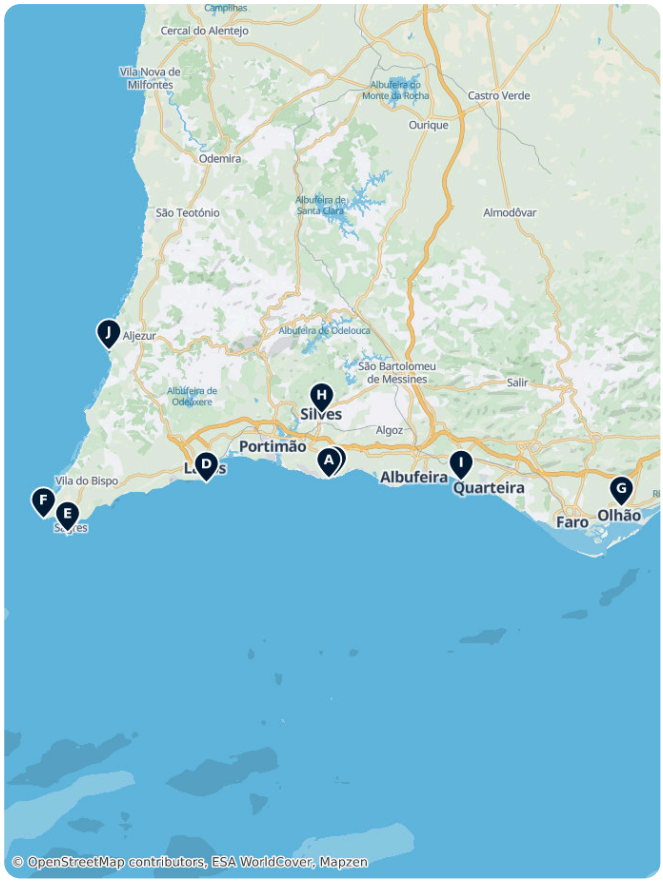
Best months: April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

The best sights are on the coast. Each area has its own character.

- A Benagil Cave is a sea cave with a hole in its roof and a small beach inside. Most visitors arrive by sea. Take a licensed boat or a guided kayak tour. Landing in the cave and swimming in are restricted.
- B Praia da Marinha has cliffs, arches and rock stacks above clear water. The C Percurso dos Sete Vales Suspensos starts here. It is an easy 5.7 km clifftop walk to Praia do Vale de Centeanes, with little shade, so start early.
- D Ponta da Piedade is a headland of arches and caves next to Lagos. The light is best in the evening.
- E Fortaleza de Sagres stands on a windy headland in the far southwest. Nearby, the F Farol do Cabo de São Vicente marks the southwestern tip of mainland Europe.
- G Parque Natural da Ria Formosa is a lagoon of channels, salt marsh and sandy barrier islands. Boats leave from Faro, Olhão and Tavira.
- H Castelo de Silves is a red sandstone fortress above the old Moorish capital of Silves. It has good views over the town and the countryside.
- I Praia da Falésia Alfamar is a very long beach under red and orange cliffs. It has room to spread out, even in summer.
- J Praia da Arrifana is a surf beach in a cliff bay on the west coast. The water is cold and the waves are strong.



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What to experience

- **Boat trip along the cliffs**: Small boats leave from Lagos, Portimão, Carvoeiro and Albufeira to visit sea caves and look for dolphins. Calm mornings are best.
- **Island day in the Ria Formosa**: Take a boat to a barrier island for a long empty beach. Bring water and shade, as the islands have few shops.
- **Lagoon by kayak**: Paddle the calm channels of the Ria Formosa early in the morning for birdwatching.
- **Surf lesson on the west coast**: Schools near Arrifana and Aljezur teach beginners in season. Water is cold, so wear a wetsuit.
- **Spa and forest walk in the hills**: Combine the spa waters of Caldas de Monchique with a walk in the Serra de Monchique. It is a cool break on a hot day.
- **Sunset at the far southwest**: Watch the sun go down from the cliffs near Sagres. It gets busy, so arrive early.

Where to explore

The Algarve is long and narrow, so pick one or two bases and travel along the coast.

- Capital and east: Faro for the airport, the old town and the lagoon. Olhão for a fishing town and island boats. Tavira for a calm historic town and island beaches. The Ria Formosa Nature Park covers the whole lagoon coast.
- Centre: Albufeira for the biggest resort and nightlife. Vilamoura for its marina and golf. Loulé is an inland market town.
- West: Lagos for cliffs and boat trips. Portimão and Carvoeiro for wide beaches and cove beaches. Sagres for the wild southwest tip.
- Inland and west coast: Silves for the castle. Monchique for forested hills and spa water. Aljezur and the Rota Vicentina for Atlantic beaches and coastal walking.

Getting there

- **By air**: Faro Airport (FAO) is the main gateway and lies next to Faro. Most resorts are 30 minutes to 1.5 hours away by road. Lisbon Airport (LIS) is an option if you combine the trip with Lisbon. See Faro Airport.
- **By train**: Fast Alfa Pendular and Intercity trains run from Lisbon to Faro in about 3 to 3.5 hours. Change at Tunes for Silves, Portimão and Lagos. Some fast trains stop at Albufeira. Book on Comboios de Portugal.
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches run from Lisbon to Faro and other Algarve towns in about 3.5 to 4 hours.
- **By car**: Lisbon to Faro is about 3 hours by the A2 motorway. The A2 charges tolls.

Getting around

- **Train**: The Algarve line runs along the coast from Lagos to Vila Real de Santo António. It serves Portimão, Silves, Albufeira, Faro, Olhão and Tavira. It is the best way to travel between the main towns. The Albufeira station is about 6 km from the old town. Book on Comboios de Portugal.
- **Regional buses**: Vamus Algarve runs the intercity buses and reaches towns without a station, such as Sagres and Monchique. Buy tickets in the Vamus app, at ticket offices or from the driver. A multi-day tourist pass covers the intercity network.
- **Local transport**: Each resort has its own town buses.
- **Boats**: Ferries and boats from Faro, Olhão and Tavira reach the barrier islands. Services run more often in summer.
- **Car**: A car is the easiest way to reach the western beaches, Sagres, Monchique and inland villages. See the driving section.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Each town is walkable on its own, but beaches and resorts are far apart, so you need a bus, train or car between them.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Distances are long and coastal roads are busy in summer, so cycling suits short local trips only.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Yes for the west coast, Sagres, Monchique and inland villages. It is not needed for a stay in one resort town with beach access on foot. Rent at Faro Airport.
- **Motorways**: The A22 runs along the coast and has no tolls. The A2 from Lisbon is tolled. Ask your rental company about a toll transponder.
- **Coast road**: The EN125 is slower and runs through every town. Use the A22 for long distances.
- **Parking**: Beach car parks fill early in July and August. Arrive early or use a bus or taxi.
- **Mountain roads**: Roads in the Serra de Monchique and on the west coast are narrow and winding.

Food & drink

Seafood is the main reason to eat in the Algarve. Look for grilled fish, grilled sardines in summer, octopus and clams. Try cataplana, a seafood stew cooked in a copper pan. For dessert, try sweets made with almonds, figs and eggs, such as Dom Rodrigo. In the hills around Monchique, look for medronho, a strong fruit spirit, and for smoked ham.

Fishing towns are the best places to eat fish. The sardine restaurants of Portimão and the waterfront of Olhão are good starting points. Covered markets sell fish and local produce. The market in Loulé is busiest on Saturday mornings. Walk a street or two away from the main beach strips for better prices.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Scan to download the app

Safety & health

The Algarve is safe for visitors. Petty theft is the main risk. Watch bags on beaches and in busy streets, and do not leave valuables in parked cars, especially at beach and viewpoint car parks.

- Stay away from cliff edges and do not sit under cliffs. They can collapse.
- Obey the beach flags. Atlantic currents can be strong, especially on the west coast.
- The summer sun is strong. Use sun protection and carry water on walks, as many trails have no shade.
- The hills are dry in summer and wildfires can happen. Follow local warnings and do not light fires.

History

The name Algarve comes from the Arabic *al-Gharb*, "the west". The Phoenicians, Romans and then the Moors all settled the coast. The Moors held the region for about five centuries. Today you can see this period in the red sandstone castle at Castelo de Silves in Silves, which was the Moorish capital. The Romans left remains such as Milreu Roman Villa, near Faro.

Portuguese forces completed the conquest of the Algarve in the 13th century. In the 15th century, the coast became a base for Portuguese voyages along the African coast. Prince *Henry the Navigator* is linked to Fortaleza de Sagres. Ships also sailed from Lagos.

The 1755 earthquake and tsunami damaged many Algarve towns. Faro later became the regional capital. Fishing towns grew into beach resorts from the 1960s, and tourism is now the main industry.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



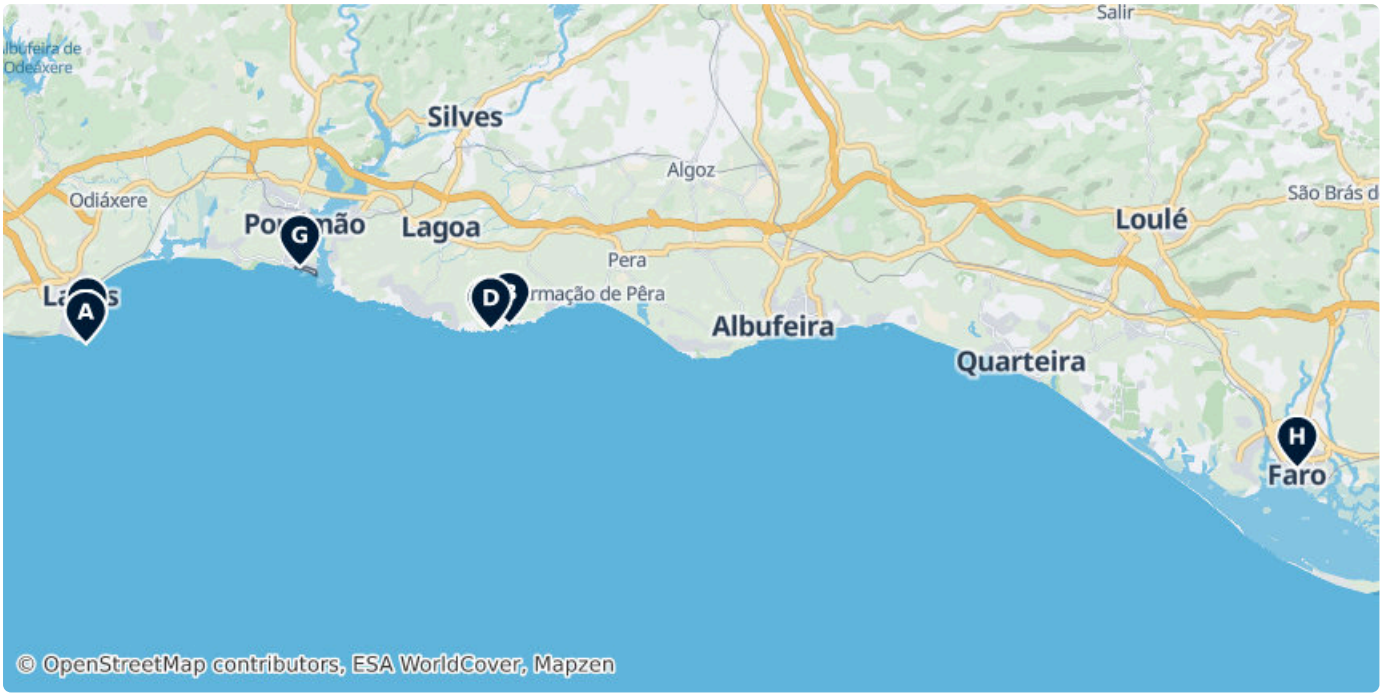
Type C / Type F
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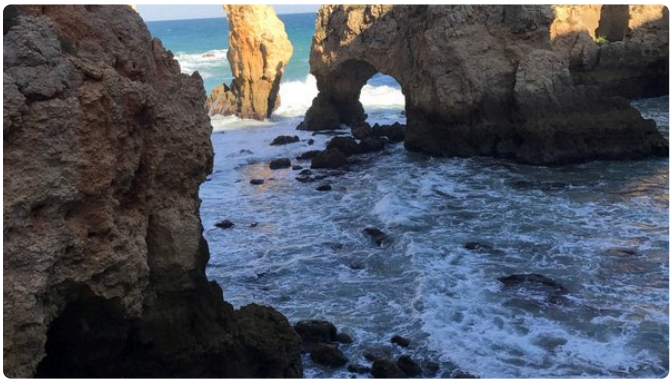
LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Algarve's Unmissable Coastline & Culture

The Algarve's southern coastline is defined by dramatic limestone cliffs and sea caves, notably the Gruta de Benagil with its natural skylight. Along the Lagos coast, Ponta da Piedade displays intricate rock arches and a historic lighthouse, while beaches like Praia da Marinha and Praia do Camilo are accessed via steep staircases carved into the bluffs. In Faro, the 18th-century Igreja do Carmo showcases Baroque architecture and houses a chapel constructed from human bones.





A Ponta da Piedade

Ponta da Piedade is a headland with a group of rock formations along the coastline of the town of Lagos, in the Portuguese region of the...

Estrada da Ponta da Piedade, 8600 Lagos, Portugal (37.08059, -8.66942)



B Marinha Beach

Praia da Marinha is one of the most emblematic beaches of Portugal with a hot-summer Mediterranean climate, located on the Atlantic coast...

(Unnamed Road), 8400, Portugal (37.08983, -8.41259)



C Praia de Benagil

A small sandy beach located in a traditional fishing village, serving as the primary departure point for boat tours and kayaks heading to the nearby sea caves.

8400, Portugal (37.08739, -8.42601)



D Benagil Cave

A massive sea cave featuring a natural circular opening in its ceiling. The interior beach is accessible only by water via boat, paddleboard, or swimming from the mainland.

Portugal (37.08720, -8.42372)

Mo–Su Open 24/7



E Praia do Camilo

A secluded cove accessed by a long wooden staircase of approximately 200 steps. High sandstone cliffs shelter the sand and turquoise waters from Atlantic winds.

Portugal (37.08734, -8.66852)

F Farol de Ponta da Piedade

Constructed in 1913 on the ruins of a 16th-century hermitage, this square masonry tower stands 51 meters above sea level to guide vessels around the Lagos headland.

Estrada da Ponta da Piedade, 8600, Portugal (37.08064, -8.66943)



G Rock Beach

Praia da Rocha is a beach and built up area on the Atlantic Ocean in the southern section of the concelho of Portimão, Algarve, southern...

8500, Portugal (37.11749, -8.53965)



H Igreja do Carmo

An 18th-century Baroque church in Faro featuring twin bell towers and a gilded interior. It is home to the Capela dos Ossos, a chapel decorated with the bones and skulls of Carmelite monks.

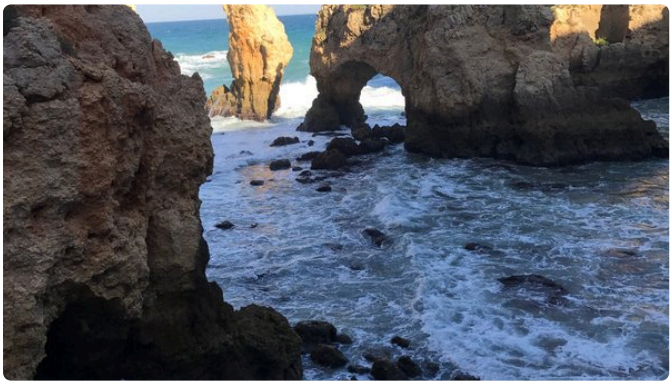
22 Largo do Carmo, Faro 8000148, Portugal (37.02020, -7.93473)

Mo–Fr	15:00–17:30
Sa	10:00–13:00

Algarve's Hidden Treasures

Explore the southern coast of Portugal through its geological and architectural landmarks. This collection features the dramatic limestone stacks of Ponta da Piedade and the sea caves of Benagil. It includes Faro's 18th-century Baroque churches, such as Igreja do Carmo with its bone chapel, and the historic anchor graveyard at Praia do Barril. These sites highlight the region's maritime history, from 20th-century lighthouses to traditional tuna fishing heritage, alongside secluded beaches sheltered by high ochre cliffs.





A Ponta da Piedade

Ponta da Piedade is a headland with a group of rock formations along the coastline of the town of Lagos, in the Portuguese region of the...

Estrada da Ponta da Piedade, 8600 Lagos, Portugal (37.08059, -8.66942)



B Marinha Beach

Praia da Marinha is one of the most emblematic beaches of Portugal with a hot-summer Mediterranean climate, located on the Atlantic coast...

(Unnamed Road), 8400, Portugal (37.08983, -8.41259)



C Praia do Camilo

A small cove in Lagos accessed by a 200-step wooden staircase. It is enclosed by high limestone cliffs and features calm waters sheltered from the wind.

Portugal (37.08734, -8.66852)



D Praia de Benagil

Located in a traditional fishing village, this beach serves as the primary departure point for boat trips to the nearby Algar de Benagil sea cave.

8400, Portugal (37.08739, -8.42601)



E Igreja do Carmo

An 18th-century Baroque church in Faro known for its twin bell towers and the Capela dos Ossos, a chapel lined with the skulls and bones of Carmelite monks.

22 Largo do Carmo, Faro 8000148, Portugal (37.02020, -7.93473)

Mo–Fr	15:00–17:30
Sa	10:00–13:00

F Farol de Ponta da Piedade

Built in 1913 on the site of a 16th-century hermitage, this square-towered lighthouse stands 51 meters above sea level on the rugged headland of Lagos.

Estrada da Ponta da Piedade, 8600, Portugal (37.08064, -8.66943)



G Praia do Barril

Situated on Tavira Island and accessible by a miniature train, this beach features the Anchor Graveyard, a memorial of over 200 anchors left by former tuna fishing fleets.

8800, Portugal (37.07374, -7.68663)

Mo–Su

Open 24/7



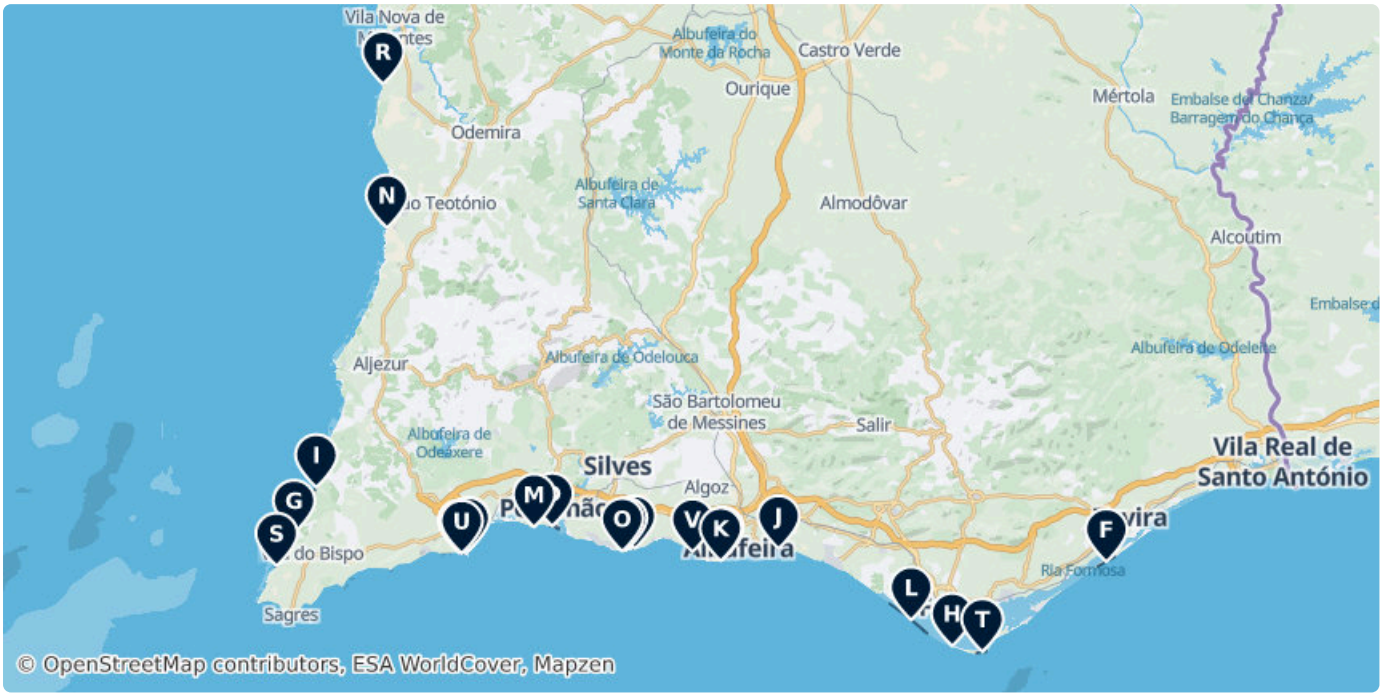
H Igreja Matriz de São Pedro

A 16th-century parish church in Faro featuring a Mannerist main portal and a Baroque interior with carved gold-leaf altarpieces and 18th-century azulejo tiles.

9 Largo de São Pedro, Faro 8000145, Portugal (37.01871, -7.93460)

Algarve's Best Beaches

The Algarve coastline features a diverse range of geological landscapes, from the iconic limestone cliffs and sea caves of the central region to the sandy barrier islands of the Ria Formosa Natural Park. This selection includes the rugged, wind-swept surf breaks of the western Vicentine Coast, historic sites like the anchor cemetery at Praia do Barril, and secluded coves accessible only by steep cliff-side staircases or boat.





A Marinha Beach

Praia da Marinha is one of the most emblematic beaches of Portugal with a hot-summer Mediterranean climate, located on the Atlantic coast...

(Unnamed Road), 8400, Portugal (37.08983, -8.41259)



B Praia do Camilo

Accessed via a 200-step wooden staircase, this cove is sheltered by ochre cliffs. A hand-carved rock tunnel connects the main beach to a smaller adjacent bay.

Portugal (37.08734, -8.66852)



C Praia de Benagil

Located in a traditional fishing village, this beach serves as the primary launch point for boat trips to the Algar de Benagil, a massive sea cave with a natural skylight.

8400, Portugal (37.08739, -8.42601)



D Rock Beach

Praia da Rocha is a beach and built up area on the Atlantic Ocean in the southern section of the concelho of Portimão, Algarve, southern...

8500, Portugal (37.11749, -8.53965)



E De Arrifes Beach

Praia dos Arrifes is a beach on the Atlantic south coast of the Algarve, close to the village resort of Sesmarias which is within the...

Rua dos Arrifes, 8200, Portugal (37.07592, -8.27761)



F Praia do Barril

Accessible by a miniature train or footbridge, this beach features the 'Anchor Cemetery,' a memorial of hundreds of rusty anchors used by the former bluefin tuna fishing fleet.

8800, Portugal (37.07374, -7.68663)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

G Praia da Cordoama

A vast beach on the western coast near Vila do Bispo, characterized by dark schist cliffs and strong Atlantic swells that attract surfers and paragliders.

Portugal (37.10878, -8.93734)

H Praia da Ilha da Barreta

An uninhabited island in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, marking the southernmost point of mainland Portugal. It is accessible only by ferry or private boat from Faro.

8000, Portugal (36.97004, -7.92416)

Mo–Su Open 24/7



I Praia do Amado

A prominent surfing location on the Costa Vicentina, known for its consistent waves and colorful rock strata ranging from yellow to deep red.

8670, Portugal (37.16495, -8.90312)



J Praia dos Olhos de Água

Named for the 'eyes of water,' freshwater springs that emerge through the sand at low tide. Traditional colorful fishing boats are still launched from the shore.

Rua dos Pescadores, Olhos de Água 8200651, Portugal (37.08972, -8.19125)

K Praia de São Rafael

Known for its clear waters and limestone formations, including the 'Small Bridge' and 'Giant' rocks. The beach offers excellent conditions for snorkeling around submerged reefs.

(37.07483, -8.28037)



L Praia da Ilha de Faro

This beach is situated on a peninsula connected to the mainland by a bridge. It borders the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the tidal marshes of the Ria Formosa on the other.

Portugal (37.00215, -7.98733)

Mo–Su Open 24/7



M Praia João de Arens

A secluded beach tucked between high cliffs and pine groves. It is accessible via a steep trail and is a frequent spot for naturism.

Portugal (37.11626, -8.56785)

N Praia da Amália

Accessed through a dense trail of vegetation, this beach features a small waterfall and was named after the famous Portuguese fado singer Amália Rodrigues.

7630, Portugal (37.48232, -8.79432)



O Praia do Carvalho

Accessible via a man-made tunnel through the cliffside. The beach is enclosed by high rock walls, providing protection from the wind and natural afternoon shade.

(Unnamed Road), 8400, Portugal (37.08667, -8.43185)

P Praia do Camilo

Small sandy cove reached by a long wooden staircase. A tunnel through the limestone cliffs leads to a second, more secluded section of the beach.

8600, Portugal (37.08792, -8.66865)

Q Praia do Porto de Mós

Flanked by high cliffs, this expansive beach is known for its medicinal clays. It marks the start of a coastal hiking trail toward Ponta da Piedade.

(37.08453, -8.68319)

R Praia da Foz dos Ouriços

A remote beach near Zambujeira do Mar where a small stream meets the ocean. It is characterized by jagged schist rock formations typical of the Alentejo border.

(37.65762, -8.80016)

S Praia da Ponta Ruiva

Named for the reddish color of the surrounding cliffs, this remote beach is a well-known spot for experienced surfers due to its powerful left-hand break.

Portugal (37.06849, -8.96425)

T Praia da Ilha Deserta

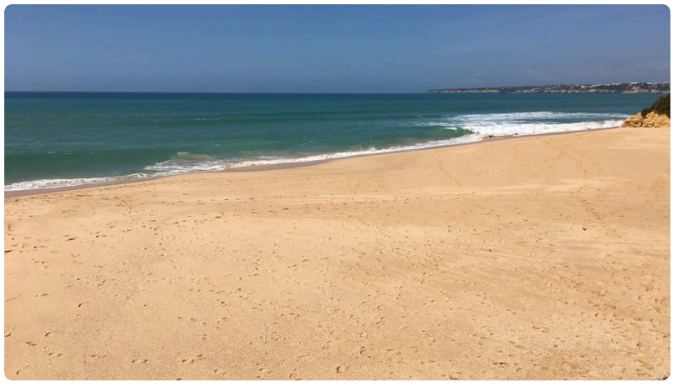
Located within the Ria Formosa, this quiet island offers over 7 kilometers of sand and is one of the few places in Portugal with an official nudist area.

Portugal (36.96329, -7.87754)

U Canavial Beach

A secluded and narrow beach located near Lagos. It is accessible via a steep cliff path and is a known clothing-optional spot.

(37.08394, -8.67927)



V Praia dos Salgados

This open sandy stretch borders a coastal lagoon, which is a significant habitat for migratory birds, including flamingos and purple herons.

8200, Portugal (37.08579, -8.32399)

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