

Monchique

Faro District · Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Monchique is a small hill town in the Serra de Monchique, about 450 m above sea level. It is cooler, wetter and greener than the Algarve coast. Forest covers much of the range, and Fóia, at 902 m, is the highest point in the Algarve.

The area suits a quiet inland break. People come for walks, views, a thermal spa at Caldas de Monchique and local smoked pork and medronho brandy. Most visitors stay one or two nights, or come for a day from the coast.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are mild and good for walking. Summer is warm and dry, and the hills are a little cooler than the coast. Winter is cool and wet, with more rain than most of the Algarve.

In summer the town holds a ham fair with regional products such as honey and medronho.

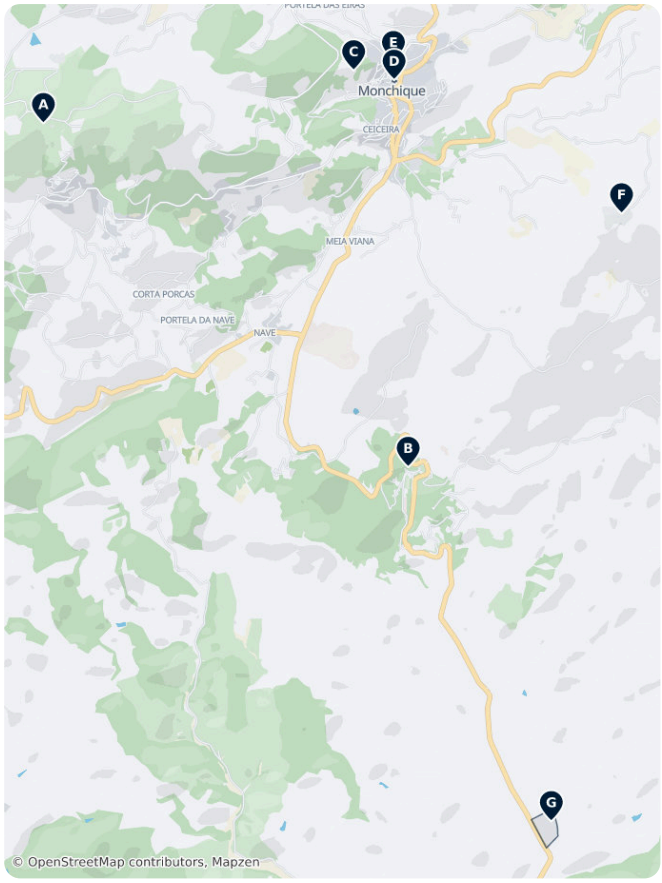
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for cycling	13° / 16° Feels like 9°	6° / 1°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	14° / 17° Feels like 10°	6° / 1°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	16° / 20° Feels like 12°	7° / 4°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	17° / 23° Feels like 14°	9° / 6°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27° Feels like 18°	11° / 8°	22 sunny days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 31°	14° / 11°	23 sunny days · Dry air · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 32°	15° / 13°	28 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 33°	16° / 13°	28 sunny days · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 30°	15° / 12°	23 sunny days
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	13° / 9°	Dry air
November	Great Great for hiking	16° / 20° Feels like 13°	9° / 4°	Dry air
December	Good Good for cycling	14° / 17° Feels like 10°	7° / 2°	Dry air

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

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Fóia is the highest point in the Algarve. A paved road leads to the top. On a clear day you can see the Atlantic.
- B Caldas de Monchique is a thermal spa village in a wooded valley about 6 km south of the town. People have used its waters since Roman times.
- C Convento do Desterro is a ruined 17th-century convent just outside the town, a short walk from the centre.
- D Igreja Matriz is the parish church. It is known for its Manueline portal.
- E Pelourinho is the old stone pillory, near the town hall.
- F Picota is another well-known peak of the range, at 774 m. It is a good goal for a hike.
- G Parque da Mina is a heritage park with an old mine, close to the spa village.



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What to experience

- Take a spa session at Caldas de Monchique. The thermal waters have a long tradition here, and the spa has an indoor thermal pool.
- Hike in the Serra de Monchique. Fóia and Picota are the best-known goals, and the forest has many walking routes.
- Go bird-watching or mountain biking in the hills.
- Drive up Fóia on a clear day for the view over the Atlantic.

Day trips

The coast is close. Most places below are 30 to 60 minutes away by car.

- A Portimão: about 30 minutes. The nearest city, with beaches and shops. Buses run from here to Monchique.
- B Silves: about 40 minutes. A historic town with a Moorish castle.
- C Aljezur: about 40 minutes. A small town near the wild west-coast beaches.
- D Lagos: about 45 minutes. A historic coastal town with sea cliffs nearby.
- E Sagres: about 1 hour 15 minutes. The far south-west corner of Portugal, with strong sea views.



Where to explore

Monchique is inland. The nearest towns are on the coast.

- Nearest city and bus connection: Portimão.
- Historic towns: Silves and Lagos.
- West coast and far south-west: Aljezur and Sagres.

Getting there

- By air: the nearest airport with scheduled flights is Faro (FAO), about 1 hour away by car. Without a car, go to Portimão first by bus or train, then take the local bus.
- By train: there is no station in Monchique. The nearest is in Portimão, on the Algarve line.
- By bus: line 94 runs from Portimão to Monchique in about 45 minutes. Service is limited, so check times before you travel.
- By car: Monchique is about 30 minutes inland from Portimão. A car is the easiest way to reach the area.

Getting around

- On foot: the town centre is small, but the streets are steep. The church is in the centre. The convent is a steep walk of about 15 minutes uphill.
- Local transport: Caldas de Monchique and Fóia are outside the town. Bus service is limited. A car or a taxi is more practical.
- Cycling: the roads are hilly. Mountain biking is popular, but expect steep climbs.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The town centre is small but steep. Sights outside the town need a car.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Roads are hilly and winding. Mountain biking is popular in the hills.

Driving

- A car is worth it. It makes Fóia, Caldas de Monchique and the coast easy to combine.
- Mountain roads are steep and winding. Allow extra time.
- The A22 along the coast has been toll-free since 1 January 2025.

Food & drink

Monchique is known for smoked and cured pork. Look for presunto (cured ham) and enchidos (sausages) made from local black pigs. Medronho is a strong brandy made from strawberry-tree berries. Local honey and chestnuts are also common.

Restaurants cluster in the town centre and around Caldas de Monchique. Try the ham and sausages there rather than looking for a single famous restaurant.

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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Safety & health

Monchique is very safe for visitors. Crime is low, but do not leave valuables in a parked car at viewpoints and trailheads.

Wildfire risk is high in summer. The range burned in a large fire in August 2018. Do not smoke or light fires in the forest, and follow local fire warnings.

Mountain roads and trails can be steep. Take water and sturdy shoes when you hike. The nearest large hospital is in Portimão.

History

The waters at Caldas de Monchique were known to the Romans, and the village later became a seasonal retreat for Portuguese royalty. Roman remains are still preserved at the spa.

The Convento do Desterro was founded in 1631 by *Pêro da Silva* for the Third Order Regular of St Francis. It was later abandoned, and today it is a ruin. Plans to restore it have been discussed for years.

The Igreja Matriz dates from the 15th and 16th centuries, and its Manueline portal comes from that time.

In August 2018 a wildfire burned for about eight days across the range. It was the largest fire in Portugal that year.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Monchique Essentials

Monchique offers a distinct contrast to the Algarve coastline, centered around the Serra de Monchique mountain range. This selection highlights Fóia, the region's highest point at 902 meters, alongside the 16th-century Igreja Matriz with its intricate Manueline portal. The list includes the ruins of a 17th-century Franciscan convent, the thermal heritage of Caldas de Monchique, and natural landmarks like the Barbelote and Chilrão waterfalls. Visitors can also explore traditional crafts and regional flavors at the municipal market and local eateries.





A Foia

At 902 meters above sea level, this is the highest peak in the Algarve, offering panoramic views across the southern coastline and the Atlantic Ocean.

(Unnamed Road), 8550, Portugal (37.31529, -8.59262)

B Cascata do Barbelote

A high waterfall cascading down a rocky cliff face, accessible via a steep trail from the road between Monchique and Fóia.

CM 1067, 8550-147 Monchique, Portugal (37.31623, -8.61321)



C Convento de Nossa Senhora do Desterro

Ruins of a 17th-century Franciscan monastery established in 1631, featuring a notable old cork oak and views overlooking the town.

(Unnamed Road), 8550, Portugal (37.31973, -8.55987)



D Capela das Caldas de Monchique

A 19th-century chapel located within the thermal spa village, known for its interior decorated with blue and white azulejo tiles.

(Unnamed Road), 8550, Portugal (37.28637, -8.55250)



E Igreja Matriz de Monchique

This 16th-century parish church is distinguished by its main portal, an example of Manueline architecture decorated with stone-carved knots and nautical motifs.

31 Rua da Igreja, Monchique 8550439, Portugal (37.31893, -8.55560)



F A Charette

A traditional restaurant serving regional Monchique cuisine, with a menu focused on black pork, wild boar, and local mountain specialties.

(37.32013, -8.55580)

+351 282 912 142

G Cascata do Chilrão

A waterfall located along the western slopes of the Serra de Monchique, visible from the road heading toward the coast.

(37.31736, -8.61921)



H Mercado Municipal

A central hub for regional products, where local vendors sell honey, medronho fruit brandy, cured meats, and traditional handicrafts.

23 Rua de Santo António, Monchique 8550444, Portugal (37.31939, -8.55473)

I Igreja de São Sebastião

A modest church featuring an 18th-century gilded altarpiece and a statue of Saint Sebastian.

23 Travessa de São Sebastião, Monchique 8550471, Portugal (37.31705, -8.55656)

J Parque da Mina

A cultural theme park set in a restored 18th-century manor house, featuring a historic iron mine, a traditional grocery store, and farm animals.

Estrada EN266, 8550, Portugal (37.25658, -8.53900)

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