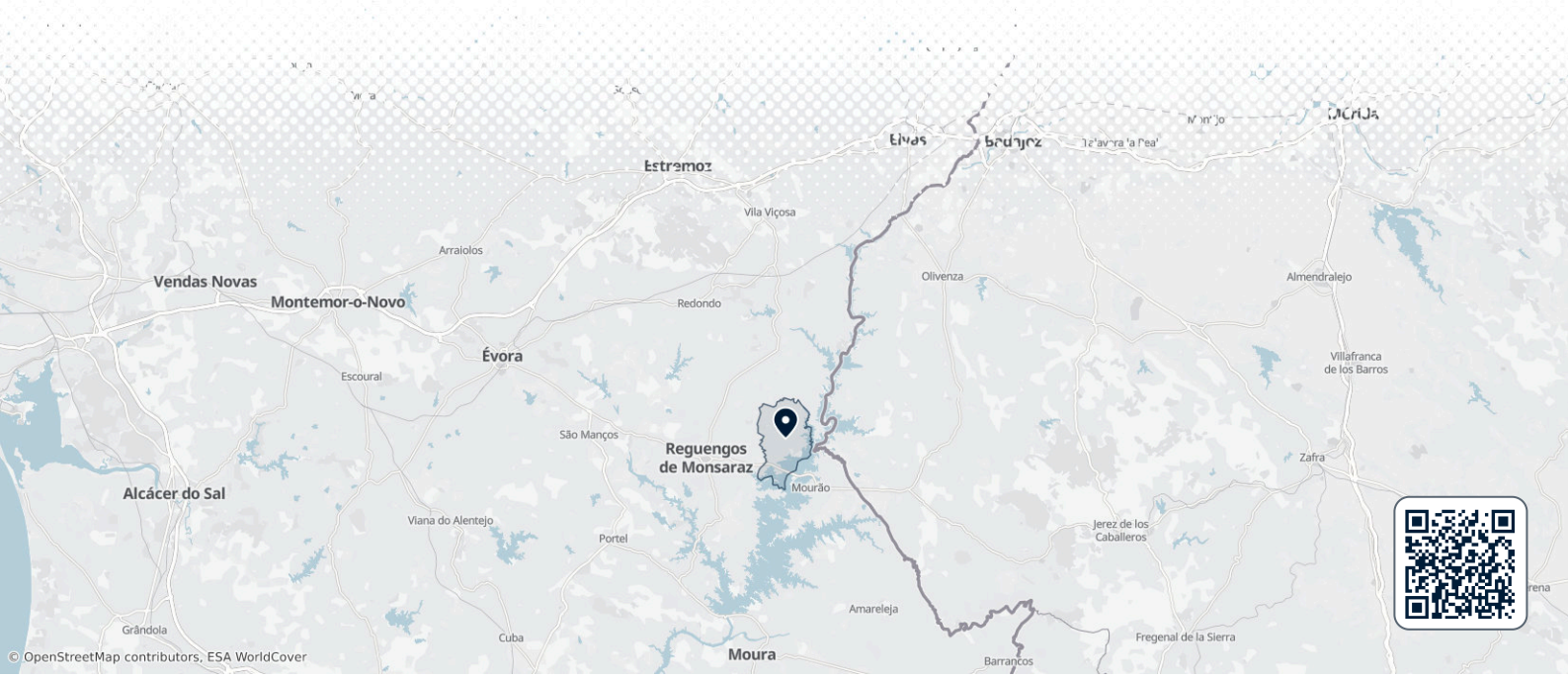


Monsaraz

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Monsaraz is a small walled village on a hill above the Guadiana valley, close to the Spanish border. Whitewashed houses and slate-paved lanes sit inside medieval walls. From the edge of the hill you look over the Alentejo plain and the Alqueva lake.

It suits a slow trip of one or two nights. Most visitors walk the village, visit a small museum or two, and spend the rest of the time on the lake, in the wine country around Reguengos de Monsaraz, or under the night sky. The area has very little light pollution and is certified as a Starlight Tourism Destination.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are the best seasons. Days are warm and walking is comfortable. Summer is very hot and dry, with little shade in the village. Winter is mild by day but cold at night.

The Senhor dos Passos festival is held in September. Clear summer nights are best for stargazing.

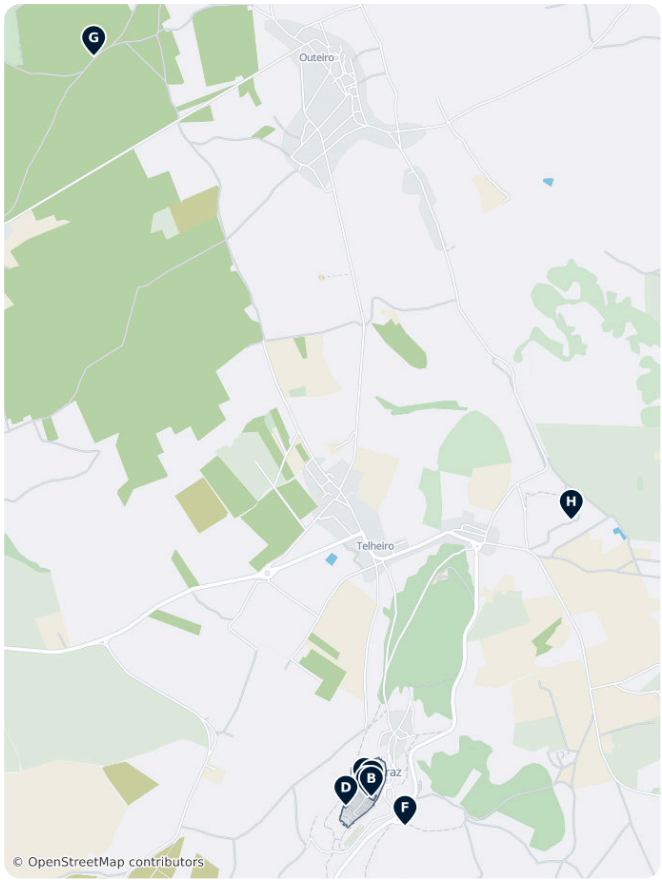
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for hiking	14° / 17° Feels like 10°	4° / -2°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	15° / 19° Feels like 11°	4° / -1°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	18° / 23° Feels like 14°	6° / 2°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 27° Feels like 17°	8° / 4°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	11° / 6°	Dry air
June	Great Great for watersports	30° / 38°	15° / 10°	23 sunny days · Dry air · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 5 days above 35°
July	Great Great for watersports	34° / 40°	17° / 13°	28 sunny days · Dry air · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 14 days above 35°
August	Great Great for watersports	34° / 40°	18° / 14°	28 sunny days · Dry air · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 14 days above 35°
September	Great Great for watersports	30° / 36°	16° / 12°	21 sunny days · Dry air
October	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 31°	12° / 7°	Dry air
November	Good Good for hiking	17° / 22° Feels like 14°	7° / 2°	Dry air
December	Good Good for hiking	14° / 18° Feels like 11°	5° / -1°	Dry air

Best months: April, May, June, September, October

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

Top sights

- A Castelo de Monsaraz guards the top of the hill. The castle is medieval and has later bastioned walls. From the walls you see the village roofs, the plain and the lake.
- B Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Lagoa is the parish church. It was built in the 16th century in Renaissance style and holds a medieval Templar knight's tomb.
- C Museu do Fresco is in the old courthouse. Its main work is a late 15th-century fresco of the Good and the Bad Judge.
- D Casa da Inquisição is an interactive centre on Jewish history in the region.
- E Pelourinho de Monsaraz is the village pillory, a stone column that was a sign of municipal rights. It stands near the main square.
- F Miradouro do Alqueva is the viewpoint over the Alqueva lake. It is a short walk from the centre.
- G Menir do Outeiro is a prehistoric standing stone north of the village. A drive or a long walk is needed.
- H Cromeleque do Xerez is a prehistoric stone circle on farmland near the village. The area has many more megalithic sites.



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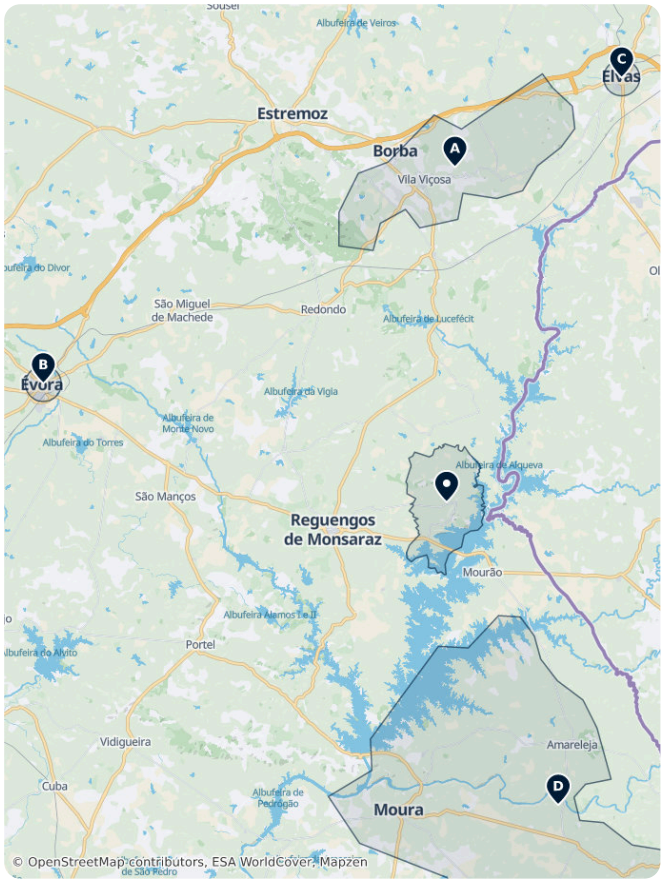
What to experience

- Stargazing: the Alqueva area is a Starlight Tourism Destination. The Observatório do Lago Alqueva is between the village and the lake and offers astronomy sessions.
- Lake boat trip: cruises run on the Alqueva lake, the largest artificial lake in Western Europe. Book ahead in summer.
- River beach: in summer, swim at Praia Fluvial de Monsaraz on the lake shore.
- Pottery: visit the workshops in São Pedro do Corval, a village near Reguengos de Monsaraz known for its pottery.
- Megalith trail: drive between the standing stones and stone circles around the village. Some are on farmland, so check access first.

Day trips

Distances are one way by car. Public transport to these places is slow.

- Mourão: about 25 min. A small town with a castle and views of the Alqueva lake.
- Reguengos de Monsaraz: about 15 min. The local town, with wine cellars and shops. Nearby São Pedro do Corval is known for its pottery workshops.
- A Vila Viçosa: about 50 min. A marble town with a large ducal palace.
- B Évora: about 50 min. A UNESCO World Heritage city with a Roman temple and a cathedral.
- C Elvas: about 1 hour. A fortress town on the Spanish border, also UNESCO listed.
- D Moura: about 55 min. A spa town south of Alqueva.



Getting there

- By air: Lisbon is the main gateway. Monsaraz is about 180 km from Lisbon, around 2 hours by car. There is no direct public transport from the airport.
- By train: there is no station in the village. Trains from Lisbon run to Évora. From there, take a regional bus to Reguengos de Monsaraz and then a local bus or taxi to Monsaraz.
- By bus: coaches run from Lisbon to Reguengos de Monsaraz, then a local bus or taxi goes up to Monsaraz. The whole trip takes 4 hours or more. Services are few, so check the timetable before you go.
- By car: this is the easiest option. Leave the car outside the village walls.

Getting around

- On foot: the village is small and compact. The lanes are cobbled and steep in places, so wear flat shoes.
- Local buses: a few buses link Monsaraz with Reguengos de Monsaraz. They are not frequent.
- Taxi: taxis can be booked from Reguengos de Monsaraz.
- To explore the lake and the countryside, a car is much easier.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The village is small and compact. Lanes are cobbled and steep in places.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Cycling inside the walls is hard on the cobbles. The countryside has quiet roads, but distances are long and summers are hot.

Driving

- A car is worth it. Public transport is limited and the lake, the megaliths and the wine country are spread out.
- Parking: leave the car outside the walls. The village is for walking.

Food & drink

Alentejo cooking is simple and filling. Look for migas and lamb dishes. Other local dishes are açorda (bread soup with garlic and herbs), pork with clams, and sheep cheese. Reguengos de Monsaraz is a wine region with its own DOC.

Restaurants are inside the village, near the main square and along the main street. Reguengos de Monsaraz has more choice.

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

Monsaraz is very safe for visitors. Petty crime is rare.

The main risk is the sun. Summer afternoons are very hot and there is little shade in the village and on the walls. Bring water, a hat and sun cream. Slate and cobbles are slippery when wet.

History

People have lived on this hill since prehistory, and the stone circles and standing stones nearby are far older than the village. Later the hill was held by Romans, Visigoths and Muslim rulers.

In 1232, King Sancho II took Monsaraz from the Moors with the help of the Knights Templar. The order held the village and guarded the border with Castile from Castelo de Monsaraz. Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Lagoa holds a Templar knight's tomb.

Monsaraz was a municipal seat until 1838, when the role moved to Reguengos. The Pelourinho de Monsaraz recalls the time it governed the area.

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

Monsaraz Unmissables

Monsaraz features a concentration of Neolithic megaliths, medieval fortifications, and religious architecture overlooking the Alqueva reservoir. This selection highlights the 16th-century Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Lagoa, the Museu do Fresco's rare 15th-century secular mural, and several prehistoric monuments including the 5.6-meter Menir do Outeiro. Local restaurants serve traditional Alentejo cuisine within historic structures, while the river beach provides access to the lake's edge.





A Ermida de Santa Catarina de Monsaraz

Late Romanesque chapel located 800 meters east of the village, featuring a circular floor plan and views over the Alqueva reservoir.

(Unnamed Road), 7200, Portugal (38.44465, -7.37166)

B Praia Fluvial de Monsaraz

River beach on the banks of the Alqueva reservoir featuring a grassy area, floating pools, and nautical sports facilities.

(Unnamed Road), 7200, Portugal (38.43464, -7.35026)

C Miradouro do Alqueva

Elevated observation point offering panoramic views of the Alqueva Lake and the surrounding Alentejo plains.

7200-175 Reguengos de Monsaraz, Portugal (38.44201, -7.37898)

D Pelourinho de Monsaraz

18th-century white marble pillory located in the main square, rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake to replace the original medieval structure.

(38.44309, -7.38075)



E Museu do Fresco

Museum housed in the former court building, featuring the 'O Bom e o Mau Juiz,' a rare 15th-century secular fresco depicting civic justice.

7200-175 Reguengos de Monsaraz, Portugal (38.44331, -7.38055)



F Convento da Orada

18th-century former convent and church built with local schist and marble, located at the foot of the Monsaraz hill.

(Unnamed Road), 7200, Portugal (38.45520, -7.37325)

fundacaoconventodaorada.pt/historia_convento.html



G Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Lagoa

16th-century Renaissance parish church featuring a triple-nave interior and the marble tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre.

10 Largo Dom Nuno Álvares Pereira, Monsaraz 7200175, Portugal (38.44309, -7.38057)

Apr-Sep Mo–Su	09:30–12:30, 14:00–18:00
Oct-Mar Mo–Su	09:30–13:00, 14:00–17:00

H Igreja de Santo António do Outeiro

Small rural church located in the village of Outeiro, serving the local Roman Catholic community.

4 Largo da Igreja, Aldeia do Outeiro 7200230, Portugal (38.46862, -7.38158)

I Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Conceição

Traditional Alentejan church located in the rural surroundings of Monsaraz.

4 Rua Nova, Barrada 7200, Portugal (38.46405, -7.39832)



J Menir da Abelhoa

Granite megalith standing nearly 4 meters tall, decorated with solar and undulating engravings from the 4th or 3rd millennium BC.

7200, Portugal (38.46225, -7.38292)

K Menir de Santa Margarida

Prehistoric megalithic monument located in the rural landscape near the village.

(38.45057, -7.43000)

arqueologia.patrimoniocultural.pt



L Menhir of Outeiro

The Menhir of Outeiro, also known as the Penedo Comprido is a megalith located midway between the villages of Outeiro and Barrada near the...

(Unnamed Road), 7200, Portugal (38.47039, -7.39362)

M Menir do Barrocal

Large granite menhir located in the Évora district, representative of the region's Neolithic megalithic culture.

(Unnamed Road), 7200, Portugal (38.44189, -7.41377)

arqueologia.patrimoniocultural.pt/index.php

N Sem Fim

Restaurant housed in a former olive oil mill, serving regional Alentejo dishes amidst original industrial machinery and art gallery spaces.

6 Rua das Flores, Telheiro 7200, Portugal (38.45443, -7.38141)

goo.gl/maps/m2Yp78bLt8hNcWy68, 962 653 711

O Alcaide

Traditional restaurant specializing in Alentejo cuisine, featuring a terrace with views over the surrounding countryside.

20 Rua das Marias, Telheiro 7200, Portugal
(38.45295, -7.37520)

DATA SOURCES

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