

Rota Vicentina

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

The Rota Vicentina is a network of marked walking trails on the southwest coast of Portugal. It crosses the Alentejo and Algarve regions and covers nearly 750 km. The trails run through the Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina Nature Park, an area of cliffs, beaches, river mouths and cork forest.

There are three kinds of route. The Historical Way (263 km) goes inland on country tracks. The Fishermen's Trail (226.5 km) follows the cliffs. Both are for walkers only. Cyclists use a separate network of cycling routes. There are also 24 circular routes of up to 16 km each. Both long trails have 13 one-day stages. The Historical Way starts in Santiago do Cacém and ends at Cabo de São Vicente. The Fishermen's Trail runs from São Torpes, near Sines, to Lagos and passes the cape. You can walk the whole route in about two weeks or do just a day or two.

When to visit

The official walking season is September to June. Winters are mild but are the rainiest time. Spring is one of the best seasons, with fresh colours and scents. In autumn, thousands of birds migrate through the coastal plains. White storks nest on the sea cliffs in late winter and spring. July and August are outside the recommended season.

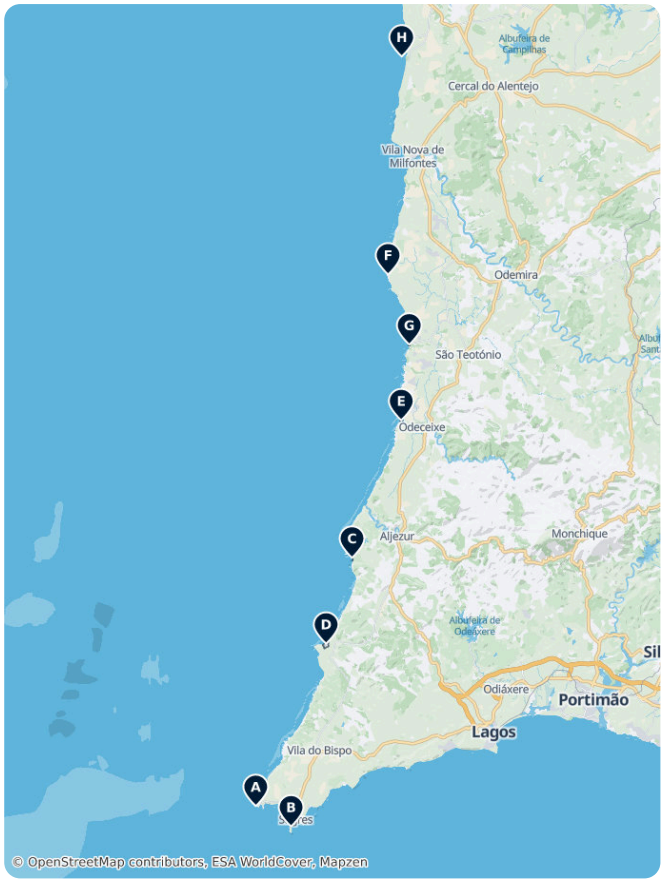
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for wildlife watching	16° / 19° Feels like 12°	9° / 4°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	17° / 20° Feels like 13°	9° / 4°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	18° / 23° Feels like 15°	10° / 6°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	20° / 26°	12° / 9°	Dry air
May	Great Great for hiking	24° / 30°	14° / 11°	☀ 22 sunny days · Dry air
June	Great Great for the beach	27° / 34°	17° / 14°	☀ 23 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for the beach	30° / 35°	18° / 15°	☀ 28 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	30° / 36°	18° / 16°	☀ 28 sunny days · Humid air · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for watersports	28° / 33°	18° / 15°	☀ 23 sunny days
October	Great Great for wildlife watching	24° / 30°	16° / 12°	
November	Great Great for wildlife watching	19° / 23°	12° / 7°	Dry air
December	Good Good for wildlife watching	17° / 20° Feels like 13°	10° / 5°	Dry air

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

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

Top sights

- A Cabo de São Vicente is the southwesternmost point of mainland Europe. Cliffs rise about 75 m above the sea, and there is a lighthouse. The Historical Way finishes here, and the Fishermen's Trail passes close by.
- B Fortaleza de Sagres sits on a headland near the cape. Tradition links it to Henry the Navigator, but this is debated. Much of the present fortress was rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake.
- C Praia da Arrifana is a sandy bay below dark cliffs. It is one of the most popular surf spots on this coast.
- D Praia da Bordeira is a long sandy beach with dunes behind it. It lies between the villages of Bordeira and Carrapateira.
- E Praia de Odeceixe lies at the mouth of the Seixe river and is sheltered by cliffs.
- F Farol do Cabo Sardão stands on high cliffs on the Alentejo coast. White storks nest on the rock stacks below, mostly in late winter and spring.
- G Praia da Zambujeira do Mar is a sandy beach below the village of Zambujeira do Mar.
- H Forte da Ilha do Pessegueiro is a ruined fort on a small island just off the coast near Porto Covo.



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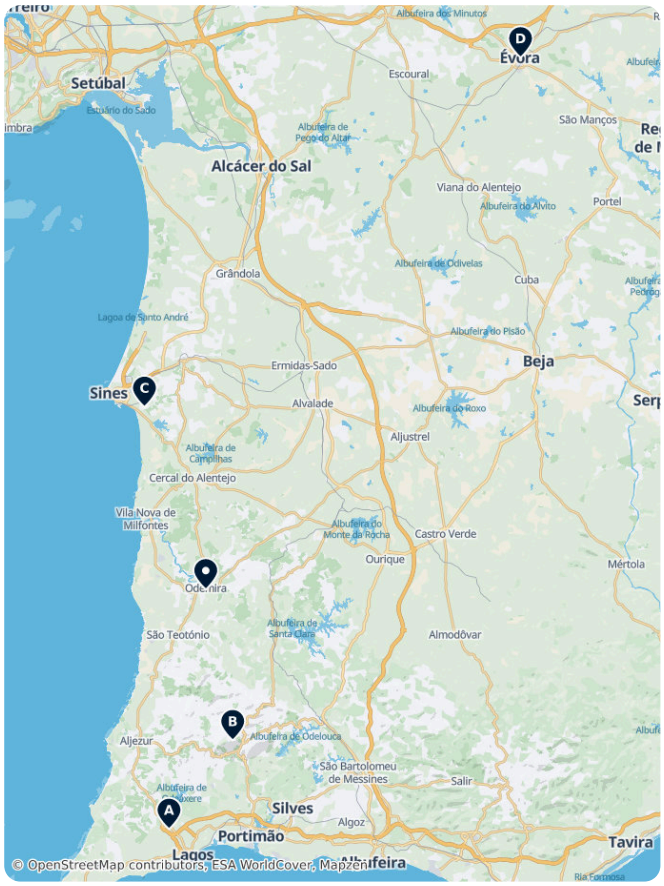
What to experience

- Walk a single stage of the Fishermen's Trail. About 60 to 70 percent of the path is sand, so allow extra time.
- Try one of the 24 circular routes. Each is up to 16 km and can be done in half a day.
- Watch white storks on the cliffs at Farol do Cabo Sardão in late winter and spring.
- Go surfing at Praia do Amado, which has surf schools, or at Praia da Arrifana.
- Swim in a river in summer. Aljezur has a beach at the mouth of its river, where the water is calm.
- Look for migrating birds on the coastal plains in autumn.

Day trips

These places are outside the trail area. Times are one way by car.

- A Lagos: about 25 minutes from Aljezur. A larger Algarve town with more shops and restaurants. The train from Faro ends here.
- B Monchique: about 40 minutes from Aljezur. A village in the hills inland from the coast.
- C Sines: about 45 minutes from Odemira. A port town at the northern edge of the region.
- D Évora: about 2 hours from Odemira. A walled historic city and UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Alentejo.



Where to explore

- Along the coast: Aljezur and Sagres are on the southern part of the trails.
- Protected area: Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina Nature Park covers most of the coast.
- Nearby towns: Lagos, Monchique and Sines.
- Beyond the coast: Évora and the wider Algarve region.

Getting there

- By air: The two gateways are Lisbon and Faro. Lisbon suits the northern part of the trails and has more transport links. Faro suits the south. By road, Lisbon to Odemira is about 202 km and Faro to Aljezur is about 108 km.
- By bus: Rede Expressos runs from Lisbon Sete Rios to Santiago do Cacém (about 2 h 20 min), Porto Covo (about 3 h) and Aljezur (about 5 h). VAMUS Algarve runs from Faro to Lagos, with regional links to Sagres, Aljezur and Odeceixe.
- By train: Trains do not reach the coast. From Lisbon, three trains a day stop at inland stations such as Funcheira and Santa Clara-Sabóia. Trains from Faro to Lagos run about nine times a day. Taxis and weekday buses continue from the stations.

See the Rota Vicentina travel page for more detail.

Getting around

- Bus: Rodoviária do Alentejo, VAMUS Algarve and Rede Expressos link the main towns. Some routes run on weekdays only, so check the timetable before you plan a stage.
- Taxi and transfers: Local partner companies offer rides between villages, luggage transfers, rides back to your car, and rides to the nearest train station. A taxi boat crosses the Mira river at Vila Nova de Milfontes. See the Rota Vicentina transport page.
- On foot: Each stage is planned as a one-day walk. Fishermen's Trail stages are up to 22.5 km. Historical Way stages are up to 25 km, except the 33 km link between Odemira and Sabóia.
- By bike: The walking trails are for walkers only. Rota Vicentina has a separate network of cycling routes.

Driving

- Is a car worth it?: A car gives you the most freedom, because some bus routes run on weekdays only. If you walk the trails, you can use taxis and luggage transfers instead.
- Routes: From Lisbon, take the A2/A12 or the IC1 towards the Algarve. From Faro, take the A22 or the N125 to Lagos.
- Tolls: The A22 has been free of tolls since 1 January 2025. The A2 is still tolled.

Food & drink

The food is simple and local. Fresh fish and seafood are the main dishes, together with dishes from the Alentejo and the Algarve. Aljezur is known for its sweet potatoes, which have EU protected status.

Eat in the villages along the route, such as Porto Covo, Vila Nova de Milfontes and Zambujeira do Mar.

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

Plan for the terrain and the weather.

- Stay back from the cliff edges. The cliffs are eroding and there is a risk of falling. The Fishermen's Trail is not suitable for people with a fear of heights.
- Sand slows you down. Plan shorter days on the Fishermen's Trail.
- Trails can close after landslides or fires. Check the warning map on the Rota Vicentina website before each stage.

History

The coast has been settled for a long time. Near Santiago do Cacém, where the Historical Way starts, you can see the Roman ruins of Miróbriga.

In the 10th century, Berbers founded Aljezur and built its main castle, now the Castelo de Aljezur. On a headland by Arrifana beach stand the ruins of a 12th-century fortress, Fortaleza de Arrifana.

Many sea battles took place off Cabo de São Vicente, including in 1797 and 1833. The present lighthouse was built in 1846 on the ruins of a 16th-century convent. Fortaleza de Sagres was attacked by Francis Drake in 1587.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

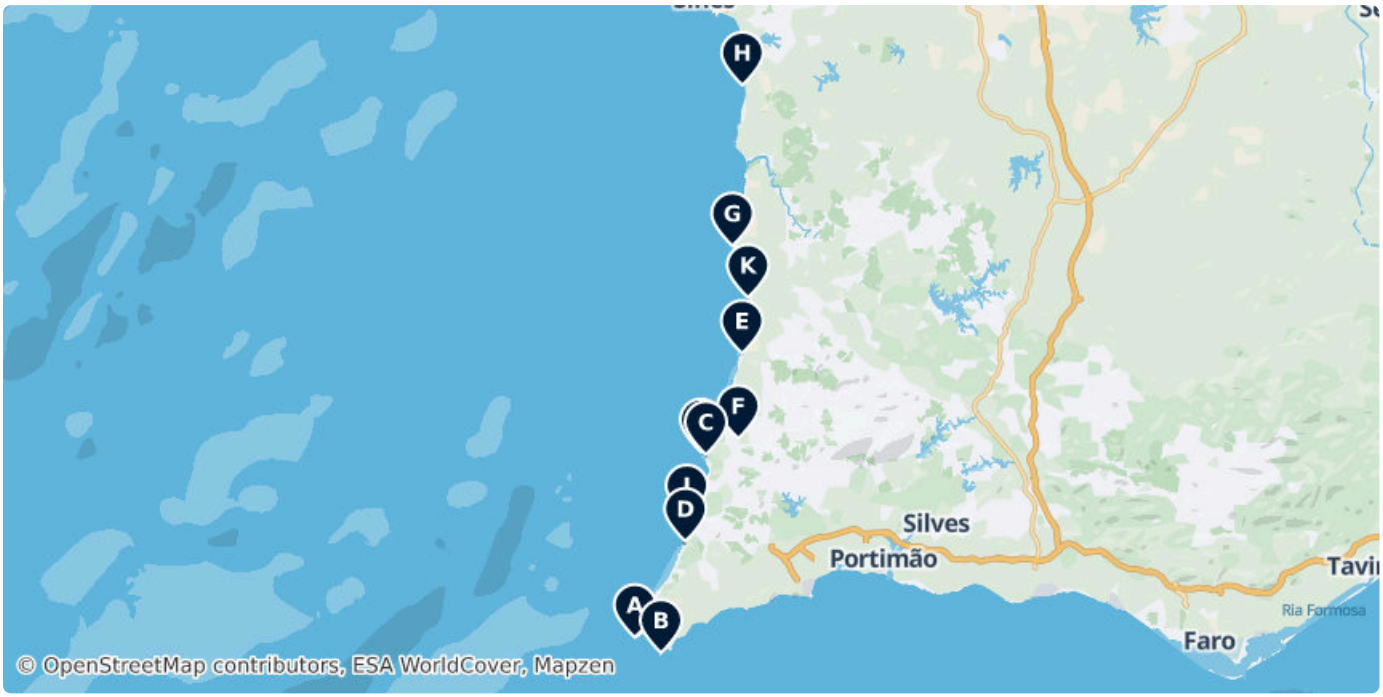


Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Top sights





A Cape St. Vincent

Headland at the southwestern tip of mainland Europe, with limestone cliffs rising about 75 m from the Atlantic and a lighthouse built in 1846.

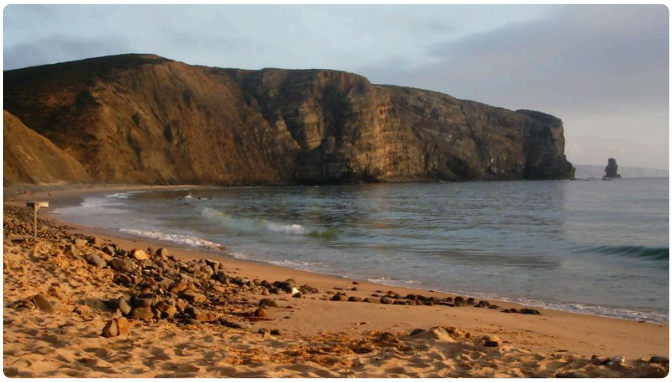
EN 268, Sagres, Portugal (37.02317, -8.99614)



B Sagres Fortress

The Fortress of Sagres, also known as Castle of Sagres or Fort of Sagres, is a military structure, located near the Sagres freguesia, in...

Acceso ao Farol, 8650, Portugal (37.00086, -8.94810)



C Arrifana Beach

Praia da Arrifana is a beach within the Municipality of Aljezur, in the Algarve, Portugal.

Portugal (37.29255, -8.86525)



D Praia do Amado

Large, quiet sandy beach in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park, known for its varied waves and surf schools.

8670, Portugal (37.16495, -8.90312)



E Praia de Odeceixe Mar

Blue Flag sandy beach at the mouth of the Seixe river, sheltered by high cliffs, on the border between the Algarve and the Alentejo.

Rua Pedro Luís, 8670-325 Odeceixe, Portugal (37.44121, -8.79825)

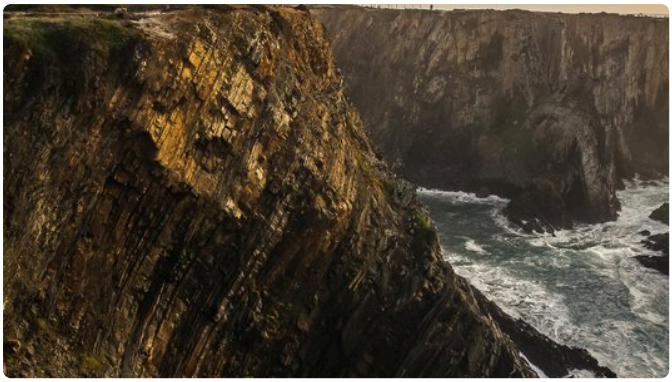


F Castle of Aljezur

The Castle of Aljezur is a medieval castle founded in the parish of Aljezur, in the municipality of the same name overlooking the Aljezur...

8670-156 (37.31627, -8.80522)

cm-aljezur.pt, +351 282 991 011;+351 282 990 010



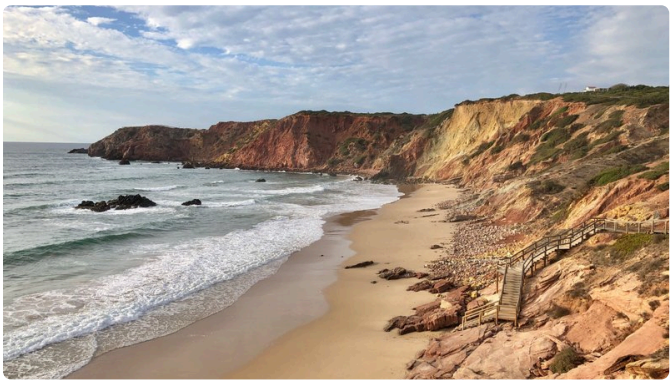
G Farol do Cabo Sardão

(Unnamed Road), 7630, Portugal
(37.59863, -8.81614)



H Forte da Ilha do Pessegueiro

Portugal (37.83345, -8.79770)



I Bordeira's beach

Long sandy beach backed by dunes on the Costa Vicentina, where the Bordeira stream reaches the sea. Popular with surfers and with people seeking quieter holidays.

8670, Portugal (37.19940, -8.90046)

Mo–Su

Open 24/7



J Ruínas da Fortaleza de Arrifana

Ruined 17th-century coastal fort on a promontory above Arrifana Beach, built in 1635 to protect tuna fishing grounds and defend the coast. It serves as a natural lookout over the Vicentine Coast.

(Unnamed Road), 8670, Portugal (37.29632, -8.87408)



K Praia da Zambujeira do Mar

7630, Portugal (37.52297, -8.78742)

DATA SOURCES

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