

Silves

Faro District · Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Silves sits on the Arade river, inland from the Algarve coast. For several centuries it was a Moorish city and the main town of the region. Today it is a quiet town below a red sandstone castle, surrounded by orange groves and cork oak hills.

It suits travellers who want history and a slower pace than the beach resorts. Most visitors spend half a day or a night here. The beaches of Carvoeiro and Portimão are about 20 minutes away by car.

When to visit

April to June and September to October are the best months for a visit. Summer is hot and dry, so see the sights in the morning or late afternoon. Winter is mild but has the most rain.

The Medieval Fair is a major annual event in August. It fills the old town with stalls, parades and tournaments for about nine days. Book rooms early if you plan to come.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for hiking	16° / 18° Feels like 12°	11° / 8°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	16° / 19° Feels like 12°	11° / 8°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	17° / 21° Feels like 14°	12° / 9°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	19° / 24° Feels like 16°	14° / 11°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	15° / 12°	22 sunny days
June	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	18° / 15°	23 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 33°	19° / 17°	28 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 33°	20° / 17°	28 sunny days · Humid air · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 30°	19° / 16°	23 sunny days · Humid air
October	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 27°	18° / 14°	
November	Great Great for hiking	19° / 22°	14° / 10°	Dry air
December	Good Good for hiking	17° / 19° Feels like 13°	12° / 9°	Dry air

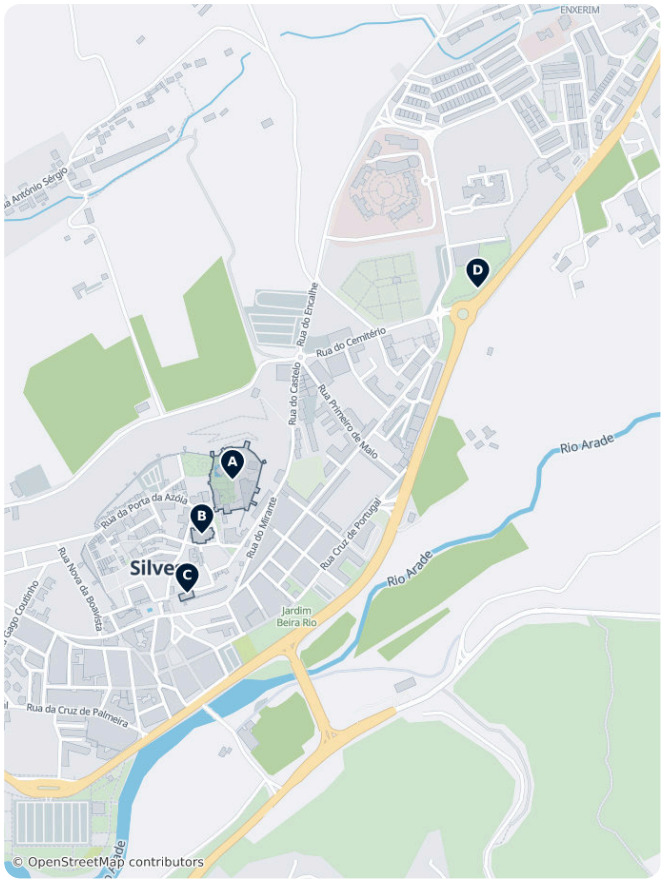
Best months: April, May, June, July, August, September, October

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

Top sights

- A Castelo de Silves is the main reason to visit. The red walls and towers largely date from the 12th and 13th centuries and were restored in the 1940s. You can walk the ramparts and see the large water cisterns inside.
- B Sé Catedral de Silves stands in the old town below the castle. It is mainly Gothic, built in red sandstone, on the site of an earlier mosque.
- C Museu Municipal de Arqueologia is built around a deep Islamic well-cistern found during digs. Its collection runs from prehistory to the 17th century, with a strong section on the Moorish town.
- D Cruz de Portugal is a carved late-medieval stone cross, about 3 m tall. It stands by the road on the edge of town and takes a few minutes to see.

Close to the museum are the Arcos da Porta de Loulé, part of the old town walls, and the old bridge over the Arade.



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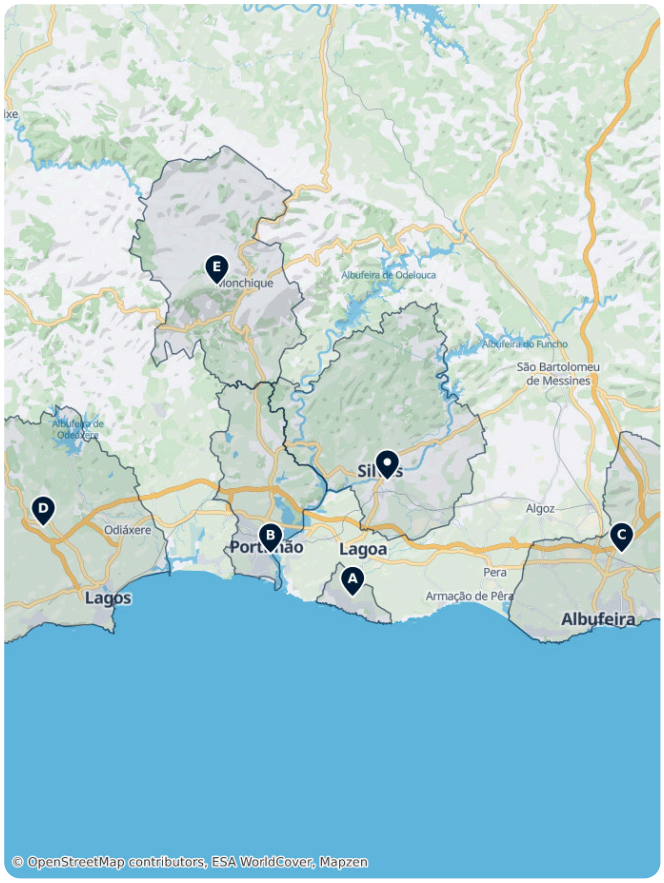
What to experience

- Medieval Fair: each August the old town and castle host a nine-day fair with a daily procession, tournament shows and stalls. Some evening banquets must be booked in advance.
- Orange groves: the countryside around Silves is a citrus-growing area. The groves are easiest to reach by car or bike.
- Cork heritage: Silves was a cork-processing town in the 19th century. The Fábrica do Inglês cork museum, near the river, reopened in July 2026 after a long closure.

Day trips

Silves is a good base for the western Algarve. The coast and the hills are all within about 45 minutes.

- A Carvoeiro: about 20 minutes by car. A small resort with cliffs, coves and short coastal walks.
- B Portimão: about 20 minutes by car, or by train on some services. It has a fishing port and the long beach at Praia da Rocha.
- C Albufeira: about 25 minutes by car, or by regional bus. It has an old town above the beach and a busy seafront.
- D Lagos: about 30 minutes by car, or about 35 minutes by direct train. Come for the old town walls and the sea cliffs of Ponta da Piedade.
- E Monchique: about 45 minutes by car. Wooded hills, a spa village at Caldas de Monchique and the Fóia peak, the highest point in the Algarve.



Where to explore

Nearby destinations, from the coast to the hills:

- Beach towns to the south: Carvoeiro, Portimão and Albufeira.
- West along the coast: Lagos and Sagres.
- Hills and nature: Monchique.
- East: Vilamoura and Tavira.

Getting there

- By air: the nearest airport with scheduled flights is Faro Airport, about 65 km away. There is no direct public transport. Go by taxi or rental car, which takes about 50 minutes, or take a bus into Faro and continue by train.
- By train: Silves is on the Algarve line, with trains to Lagos, Portimão and Faro. The trip from Faro takes about 1 hour. From Lisbon the trip takes about 3 to 3.5 hours with at least one change. The station is about 2 km south of the centre, so plan on a taxi.
- By bus: regional buses link Silves with Portimão, Albufeira and Lagoa. See the Vamus Algarve site for routes and fares: Vamus Algarve.

Getting around

- Walking: the centre is small. The streets from the river to the castle are steep and paved with cobbles.
- Local and regional buses: Vamus Algarve runs regional buses. Check the operator for current routes, tickets and fares: Vamus Algarve.
- Train: the station is about 2 km from the centre and the road has few footpaths, so take a taxi. The station is unstaffed. Buy tickets in the CP app or online up to 60 days ahead, or at larger stations: CP Comboios de Portugal.
- Cycling: the old town is hilly and the main roads are busy. Cycling is better on quiet roads outside town.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The old town is compact and easy to walk, but the streets up to the castle are steep and cobbled.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

The old town is hilly and the main roads are busy. Cycling suits quiet country roads outside town.

Driving

- Is a car worth it? Not for the old town, but yes for the beaches, the Monchique hills and the orange country around Silves.
- Motorway: the A22 has been toll-free since 1 January 2025, so the drive to Faro or Lagos has no toll charge. The A2 towards Lisbon is still tolled.
- Parking: use the large car park southwest of the old town and walk in. The centre has narrow streets and few spaces.

Food & drink

Silves is a town for simple Algarve cooking. Look for cataplana (a seafood or meat stew cooked in a copper pan), grilled sardines in summer and bacalhau. Sweet pastries here often use almonds, figs and egg.

Eating clusters in the pedestrian streets of the old town, such as Rua Elias Garcia and Rua Cruz de Portugal, and near the daily municipal market. Some small family restaurants take cash only.

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

Silves is a safe, quiet town. Petty theft is the main risk, so do not leave bags or valuables visible in parked cars, especially near the castle and the river.

The cobbled streets are slippery when wet and steep near the castle. In summer, carry water and a hat on the ramparts, which have little shade.

History

Under Moorish rule the town was called Xilb. It became an independent kingdom in the 11th century and a centre of poetry and learning. The Castelo de Silves grew in this period, with walls, towers and cisterns still visible today.

King *Sancho I* took the town in 1189. The Almohads recaptured it in 1191, and Portuguese forces under *Paio Peres Correia* took it for good in 1242. The great mosque became the cathedral, and the site is now the Sé Catedral de Silves.

The bishop's seat moved to Faro in 1577, and the town lost its role as the main town of the region. The 1755 earthquake later damaged the cathedral and the castle. The Cruz de Portugal is traditionally linked to King *Manuel I*. The Museu Municipal de Arqueologia shows finds from every period.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



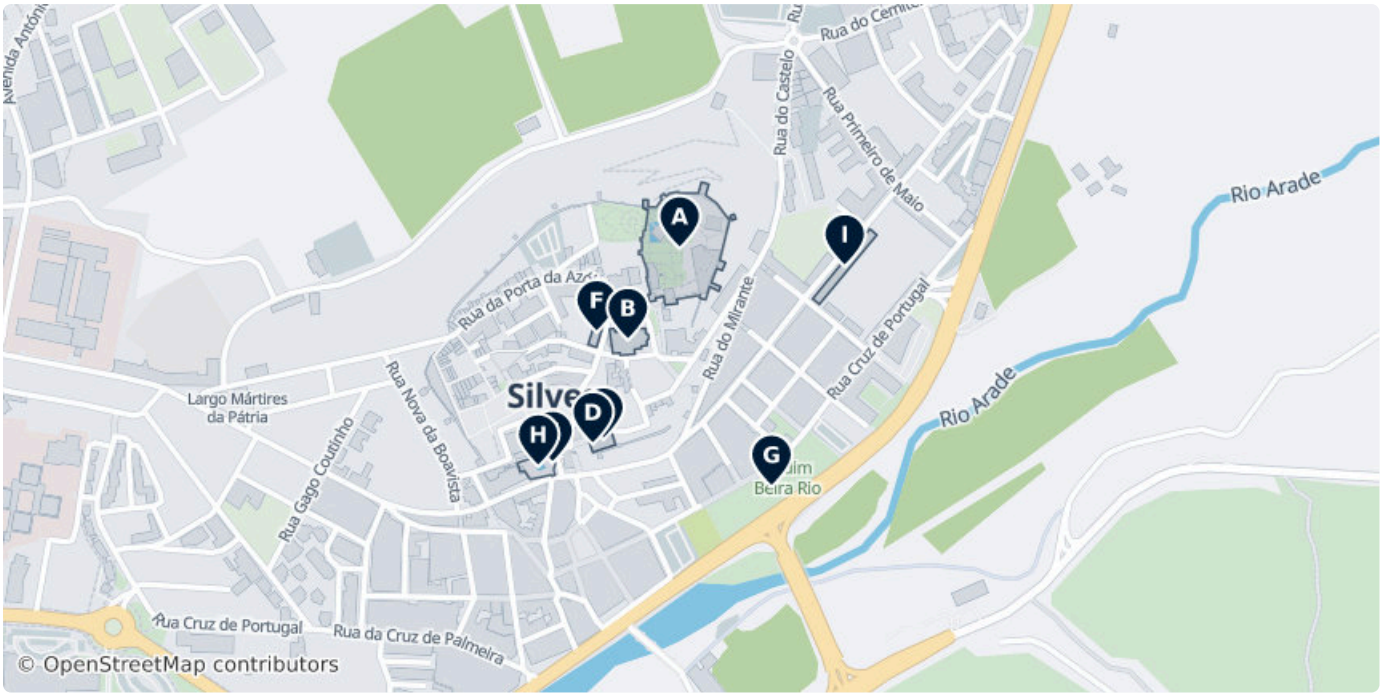
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Silves Essentials

Silves served as the Moorish capital of the Algarve, a legacy visible in its red sandstone castle and Gothic cathedral built atop a former mosque. This collection highlights the city's medieval heritage, including the 11th-century Almohad cistern-well at the Archaeological Museum and the Manueline architecture of the Igreja da Misericórdia. Beyond the fortifications, explore the region's industrial past at the Cork Museum or walk along the Arade River through the Jardim Beira Rio.





A Castle of Silves

The Castle of Silves is a castle in the civil parish of Silves in the municipality of Silves in the Portuguese Algarve.

Silves 8300, Portugal (37.19100, -8.43787)

pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castelo_de_Silves



B Silves Cathedral

This 13th-century Gothic cathedral was built on the site of a former mosque. It features a red sandstone facade and houses the tombs of several Portuguese kings and crusaders within its Latin cross interior.

9 Rua da Porta do Sol, Silves 8300142, Portugal (37.19003, -8.43856)



C Silves Archaeological Museum

Built around a preserved 11th-century Almohad cistern-well, this museum displays regional artifacts ranging from the Paleolithic era to the 17th century, with a primary focus on Silves' Islamic period.

9 Rua da Porta de Loulé, Silves 8300139, Portugal
(37.18897, -8.43889)

Tu–Su 10:00–18:00

D Poço-Cisterna Árabe de Silves

An 11th-century Islamic cistern-well featuring a spiral staircase that descends 18 meters. It is a significant example of Almohad-era hydraulic engineering and is integrated into the municipal archaeological museum.

(37.18892, -8.43903)



E Pelourinho de Silves

A stone pillory representing municipal authority, reconstructed in the Manueline style. It stands in the historical center near the town hall.

5 Largo do Município, Silves 8300117, Portugal
(37.18872, -8.43957)



F Igreja da Misericórdia

A 16th-century church located opposite the cathedral, notable for its intricate Manueline-style side portal and its collection of religious art and altarpieces.

5 Rua da Misericórdia, Silves 8300137, Portugal
(37.19011, -8.43898)



G Jardim Beira Rio

A landscaped park situated along the banks of the Arade River, featuring walking paths, palm trees, and views of the medieval bridge and the city's fortification walls.

25 Rua da Cruz de Portugal, Silves 8300135, Portugal
(37.18846, -8.43663)

I Museu da Cortiça

Located in the former Fábrica do Inglês, this museum documents the Algarve's cork processing history through industrial machinery and exhibits on traditional production methods.

(37.19081, -8.43565)

H Largo do Município

The central municipal square of Silves, home to the 18th-century Town Hall building and serving as a primary entrance to the historic uphill district.

3 Rua 25 de Abril, Silves 8300184, Portugal
(37.18868, -8.43976)

DATA SOURCES

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