A GUIDE TO THE

Algarve

visit Algarve
Portugal
The Algarve has long been a firm favourite on the European holiday scene, and with its glorious beaches, shimmering turquoise seas, beautiful scenery, delicious food and plentiful sunshine, that’s no surprise.

Only two-and-a-half hours away by plane from the UK with non-stop flights operating to Faro International Airport from 24 airports across the country and no time difference to contend with, it is one of the most easily accessible destinations on the continent.

Expect fun for everyone, whether you are travelling with your partner, on your own, with friends or with the family in tow, there are hotels, culinary delights and activities to suit all.

Algarve Statistics

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<th>Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
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Climate

Long hot summers, pleasant spring and autumn seasons and mild winters, there’s no bad time to visit the Algarve. With roughly 300 sunshine days per year, expect sun all-year-round in Portugal’s southernmost region. Peak visiting season takes place through July and August when the Algarve is at its warmest, but June and September are popular with couples and those looking for a quieter holiday as these months sit either side of the school summer break.

Average Monthly Temperatures (°C)

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<th>APR</th>
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Front cover: Praia da Marinha
Interesting facts

The Algarve is one of Europe’s least densely populated areas, with 76 residents for every square kilometre, compared to 267 in the UK.

One in three Portuguese people are able to speak English.

The Algarve is a culinary haven with no fewer than eight Michelin Star restaurants.

In the 15th century, Prince Henry the Navigator opened a school of navigation and an astronomical observatory in Sagres, where people were trained in navigation, map making and science in order to sail down the west of Africa.

Portuguese Water Dogs are native to the Algarve and were once a fisherman’s main companion and often taken with sailors during the Portuguese discoveries.

An American-based study in 2016 named the Algarve as the best place in the world to retire.
Praia da Rocha
Located in Portimão, Praia da Rocha – which translates to “beach of the rocks” – is one of the Algarve’s top spots for families where you can enjoy coastal bliss without the crowds. Even at peak times, you should be able to pitch up on a good spot on this huge expanse of sand, and there are opportunities for water sports in the warm Atlantic waters as well as exploring the array of small caves dotted along the cliffs.

Beach
Named the ‘Best Beach Destination 2019’ by the World Travel Awards, you’ll never be short of somewhere to lay out a towel and relax or build a few sandcastles. Some of our favourites in the region include Praia da Marinha, Praia de Falésia, and Meia Praia.

Waterpark
If you’re a fan of thrills and splashes, you’ll be spoiled for choice in the Algarve. At Aquashow Park, the largest water and theme park in Portugal, you’ll find a variety of slides for all ages that the whole family can enjoy together. When it’s time to dry off, enjoy awesome bird and reptile shows among other attractions.

Castles
As a region steeped in tumultuous history, the Algarve has been no stranger to medieval conquests from across Europe and Africa. As a result, there are now several impressively well-preserved castles dotted across the region, where the whole family can become enthralled in tales of the past. Who says history can’t be fun?
Clam picking in Ria Formosa
For a unique local experience, why not spend the day with a local clam picker and take part in his daily clam picking tasks? This real-life adventure takes place on a traditional fisherman’s wooden boat, and you’ll learn ancient clam picking skills and secrets. The activity takes place in the heart of the Ria Formosa Natural Park, a protected lagoon for different species of flora and fauna. Finish with a visit to an oyster bank and enjoy some oyster tasting accompanied by a glass of local wine.

Portugal’s Algarve coast is one of the hottest family holiday destinations right now. It’s easy to see why – the Algarve has something for travellers of all ages, making it ideal for your next family adventure. Here’s a flavour of what you can expect.

Restaurante Paixa
Paixa opened in Vale do Lobo and is making a name for itself. The modern décor in a spacious setting, filled with natural light during the day and a cosy atmosphere at night with candlelight and dimmed lights, has left guests greatly pleased, many of which already regulars at the restaurant founded by João Lourenço 16 years ago in Loulé - Paixanito. This new venue is the continuation of the Loulé restaurant, a natural evolution in which the concept of small dishes, with a menu of around 40 different tapas, carries on.
Embarking on a voyage with P&O Cruises is one of the finest ways to experience Portugal.

Departing from Southampton, P&O’s seven-night itinerary calls in at Vigo, Spain’s busiest fishing port just north of the Portuguese border, before arriving in Lisbon, passing the Belem Tower and Monument to the Portuguese Discoveries on the way into the terminal.

From there, it’s on to the enchanting historic city of Porto – renowned for its port wine and Parisian-style squares.

Reasons why you should book your holiday with P&O Cruises:

Excellent accommodation, delicious meals, entertainment, daytime activities and children’s clubs are all included as standard, so you can make the most of every moment.

A diverse and stunning fleet. Whether you’re looking for a larger ship or something more intimate, family-friendly or exclusively for adults, there’s something to suit your needs.

Relax and recharge. With a whole host of both leisurely and more active daytime activities available, you can enjoy your holiday at your own pace.

Enthralling entertainment. Take your seat for a theatre show, enjoy a live band or some comedy, or seek out a cozy corner in an elegant bar; it’s all on offer onboard.

Explore in comfort. With a wide range of shore excursions available, there’s plenty on offer for all ages and interests.

P&O Cruises are the world’s original cruise line, with all itineraries intuitively designed with great British tastes in mind.

No tipping is needed on P&O’s ships, so you can relax knowing good service and good times are all part and parcel of your holiday.
Taste

With the Atlantic lining its south coast, it shouldn’t be surprising that cuisine in the Algarve is synonymous with seafood. Food here tends to be hearty and naturally bears a heavy Mediterranean influence. What can you expect to tuck into during a stay in the Algarve?

Cataplana is a Portuguese seafood dish originating in the southern region of Portugal in Algarve, and it is about as traditional a Portuguese dish as you can get. It uses a copper cooking device also called a Cataplana which unique to the Algarve region. The dish combines different delicious seafoods like prawns, littleneck clams, and chourico sausage.

Nando’s might have sold piri-piri chicken to the world, but this spicy chicken dish is traditionally cooked in the Algarve and, in particular, the hillside town of Guia near Albufeira. Any independent restaurant here will claim chicken piri-piri as a speciality.

Amarguinha is a Portuguese liqueur made from the best almonds available in the south of Portugal (Algarve) also known as “amendoa amarga” (bitter almond). Over the years Amarguinha has gained recognition around the world and is served in the finest restaurants and homes.

Dom Rodrigo is a Portuguese dessert that is traditionally associated with the Algarve region, where it’s been made since the 18th century. It is prepared with a combination of egg yolks, sugar, ground almonds, cinnamon, and fios de ovos - a traditional confectionary product consisting of thin egg threads.

Grilled sardines barbequed over charcoal in a steel drum by vendors on the quayside or on the street and served on fresh, crusty bread. It’s a simple, cheap but tasty culinary treat not to be missed.
Get active in the Algarve

The Algarve has been named the world’s ‘Golf Destination of the Year’ for 2020 by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO). It is home to a plethora of spectacular championship courses, each surrounded by stunning landscapes and fabulous stretches of sun-kissed coastline.

Golf

Tennis

Cycling

Whilst the famous Quinta do Lago is perhaps best known as a golf resort, it’s also home to The Campus, which features a unique tennis academy providing professional-level training to both residents and guests. Meanwhile, the five-star Pine Cliffs Resort has the Annabel Croft Tennis Academy, which offers five floodlit courts and coaching courses.

If you’re ready to explore the undiscovered side of the Algarve, there’s no better way to do so than on a bike. Home to quaint fishing villages, working windmills, ancient castles, fields filled with flowers and fragrant olive groves, you’ll enjoy an unforgettable cycling experience in the beautiful Algarve.
Home to immaculate golf courses, stunning hiking trails, superb cycling tracks and incredible dive sites, the stunning Algarve is also the perfect place to enjoy the outdoors and get active. Here’s what you can get up to during a stay there.

**Walking**

If you’re a keen walker, the Algarve has a vast network of routes and trails to explore. With a dizzying variety of landscapes, historical treasures and unique flora and fauna, strap on your hiking boots and discover the Algarve that remains hidden from those who choose to take the car.

**Water Sports**

Take to the sea on a sailing trip and explore the breathtaking coastline or set off on a scuba diving adventure to discover old wrecks, colourful reefs and fascinating caves. There are also places where you can enjoy water-skiing, jet skiing and windsurfing.
With so much to see and do in the Algarve, there are plenty of experiences that don’t get the attention that they deserve. Here’s a look at a few of the Algarvian towns that are worth a visit.
Once the capital of the ancient Arab kingdom of Algarve, Silves was the most important city in the area. Head up to the castle, built by the Arabs to defend the territory, for incredible views over the city and its surroundings. Visit in August to absorb the atmosphere at the medieval fair, and make sure to see some of the region’s most treasured artefacts at the Municipal Archaeological Museum.

Lively and carefree, Albufeira has beautiful beaches and plenty of entertainment day and night. Visit the Chapel of Our Lady of Orada, especially during its feast each August, to see the grand procession of colourful boats. The modern marina with its excellent bars and traditional restaurants is also a must.

This charming town on the river Gilão displays Arabic and Roman influences throughout its lovely architecture. Head to the anchor graveyard on Barril Beach, a poignant monument where hundreds of anchors - once used for tuna fishing - stand embedded in the sand. You can also take a leisurely stroll around the town’s meandering streets and discover the remains of its Islamic walls.

The gateway to the Algarve and capital of the region, this delightful historic city has plenty to see and do. Climb to the Cape Santa Maria lighthouse, the most southerly point of mainland Portugal, and admire stunning sea views. In summer, spend a day on the beaches of nearby Barreta Island, one of the region’s most relaxing beach spots.
Our Travel Counsellors know the world better than anyone else. Check out their recommendations for the perfect Algarve experience.
Travel Counsellor Sally recommends... Quarteira

I love staying in Quarteira, which is only about 20 minutes from Faro Airport. Quarteira has managed to retain its Portuguese character and is a very popular destination for Portuguese people themselves, particularly from the north of the country.

It has a lovely pedestrianised promenade where you can spend time relaxing with lovely walks along the seafront and enjoying the outdoor terraces of the bars and restaurants in the sunshine. Quarteira also has a beautiful sandy beach and sunbeds are available for hire.

I stayed at the Dom Jose Beach Hotel in Quarteira, which is in a great location on the promenade with direct access to the beach. It has 154 rooms, an outdoor pool and a lovely terrace overlooking the sea, which is an ideal place for a relaxing drink and to watch the world go by.

Travel Counsellor Emma recommends... Pine Cliffs Resort

I have been fortunate enough to stay at the wonderful Pine Cliffs Resort a couple of times. It is a destination in its own right and makes for the perfect retreat. One of the key features of the resort is the amazing sandy beach that’s eight kilometres long, accessed via a lift and boardwalk.

There are six outdoor pools. The health club has a gym, a large indoor pool, Jacuzzi and sauna. The spa offers a revitalisation pool, a thermal area, steam room, sauna and Jacuzzi, while for the more active, there’s a nine-hole golf course, five floodlit tennis courts, the Annabelle Croft Tennis Academy and a seven-a-side football pitch. The kids’ club here is a unique feature offering mini golf, a large wooden pirate ship and a basketball court. If you’re thinking that all these facilities mean lots of walking, then think again. A mini train runs around the resort every 15 minutes connecting everywhere you’ll need to go.

Travel Counsellor Helen recommends... Lagos and Silves

We really enjoyed the Algarve. It is an extremely pretty region and there is plenty to see and do if you are prepared to explore. I would definitely recommend hiring a car for your stay.

I was surprised at how built up some of the coastal resorts and towns are, yet the region is still steeped in history and it doesn’t take much to find somewhere authentic and traditional. Lagos was one of my favourite places to visit, with its old walled city and we especially enjoyed driving inland up into the mountains. I would also recommend Silves, with its stunning coastline and beautiful beaches. We spent a day walking along one of the coastal paths, which was something I will never forget.
Wondering how many Euros you’ll need when visiting the Algarve? Here’s a little look at some of the things you might be buying whilst you’re there.

- **£90**: Round of golf at Boavista Golf & Spa Resort
- **£76**: Aquashow Algarve family ticket (2 adults, 2 children)
- **£2**: Domestic draught beer
- **£4**: One-way ticket on local public transport
- **£3**: General admission ticket for Museu de Portimão
- **£30**: Three-course meal for two at a mid-range restaurant
Can't speak Portuguese? Worry not. A third of Portuguese people speak English, but it's still handy to have a few phrases prepared just in case. You might not be able to pronounce the words like a local but at least you'll have made the effort...

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>HELLO / HI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>SIM</td>
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<td>MY NAME IS...</td>
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For a wellness-focused break, you’d struggle to do better than Pine Cliffs Resort. One of the major draws at the resort is its Serenity Spa, which was named the best in Portugal at 2018’s World Luxury Spa Awards.

The spa managed to set itself apart from the competition with its experience showers, sauna with Himalayan Rock Salt, ice fountain, relaxation areas, indoor hydro pool, a water treading Kneipp pool, steam bath, herbal sauna, outdoor jacuzzi and Hammam Turkish bath.

Golfers will be equally wowed here with Pine Cliffs Resort also securing the title of Best Golf Hotel at the 2017 World Travel Awards.

Overlooking the lush Victoria golf course, hidden away in scenic rural Algarve, Anantara Vilamoura Algarve is a peaceful and prestigious five-star sanctuary offering authentic luxury.

The 280-room hotel is a showcase for Portuguese talent with local art works dotted throughout the property, immersing you in your enviable destination. All rooms feature balconies looking out onto the gardens, golf course or one of the four pools, whilst suites boast personal butler service and lavish Jacuzzis in some cases.

Sip Veuve Clicquot in poolside champagne cabanas or try ancient Mediterranean therapies at the award-winning Anantara Spa as the kids attend dance and football academies.
The elegant Vila Vita Parc Resort is renowned for two Michelin-starred dining with ocean views that will take your breath away.

Head chef Hans Neuner takes the finest ingredients to create exquisite dishes that pay homage to Portuguese traditions.

Tasting menus feature classics such as cataplana alongside exciting seafood creations including squid, sea urchin and crab. Even bread and butter is given an inspirational twist – serving Atlantic nori bread with goat milk butter.

Situated on a cliff top within walking distance of the beautiful Dona Ana beach and stunning Ponta de Piedade lighthouse, the luxurious five-star Cascade Wellness & Lifestyle Resort offers an elegant and sophisticated break, with the chance to relax and unwind, and explore the picturesque city of Lagos.

The resort is popular with couples and families, even sports teams keen to improve their performance in a luxury setting. That appeal is the result of the resort’s tranquil Tainai Spa, natural sand-bottomed swimming pool, mouthwatering cuisine, sports facilities and kids’ club.

Sample fresh, regional ingredients at one of two on-site restaurants, sip a glass of French Champagne at the Pommery Champagne Bar, or relax with a delicious cocktail at the sophisticated hotel bar.

Anyone heading to the Algarve is spoilt for choice when it comes to top-notch accommodation – and with so many fantastic hotels and resorts to choose from, where do you start? Well, we’ve picked out four potentials…
Self-drive Algarve Itinerary
Day 1: Arrival and check-in

Arrive into Faro Airport and collect your hire car before driving to Albufeira where you’ll check-in to Pine Cliffs, a Luxury Collection Resort. The five-star property promises an opulent stay for any discerning travellers heading to southern Portugal. Perched on a clifftop overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, Pine Cliffs Resort offers stunning views over the coast and immaculate resort grounds, with each of its 217 rooms and suites boasting a light and charming Mediterranean feel.

Day 2: Quarteira Market

Included in the cost of your trip is a guided tour of Quarteira Market. This open-air market is one of the most popular in the region and is a great place to pick up a bargain if you are prepared to get into the spirit of things with some jovial bartering. Held every Wednesday, it is known for selling almost anything from clothes, sunglasses and toys to local produce, games and plants.

Day 3: Praia de Benagil

An example of the Algarve’s stunning natural beauty, enjoy an included boat trip to Benagil, home to the popular Praia de Benagil beach which is famous for its sensational cave known as Algar de Banagil. This cave has a round hole in its ceiling through which light pours while framing the beautiful blue sky. Enjoy a boat trip into the cave and explore the immediate coastline from a different vantage point. Then you’ll have the rest of the day to soak up some sun on the beach’s golden sands.

Day 4: Check-in to Cascade Wellness & Lifestyle Resort

Drive on to Lagos and your next hotel – the five-star Cascade Wellness & Lifestyle Resort. Within walking distance of Dona Ana Beach, voted by Condé Nast Traveller as one of the 50 best beaches in the world, this stunning cliff-top property offers an elegant and sophisticated experience to its guests and has an incredible array of restaurants and spa and fitness options to keep you occupied. Spend the day enjoying the hotel’s facilities such as the outdoor swimming pools, ice fountain and Turkish bath.

Day 5: Explore Lagos town, Sagres and Cape St Vincent

Spend the fifth day of your Algarve adventure with a trip to Lagos town, Sagres and Cape St Vincent – three of the Algarve’s finest destinations. Highlights of the tour include a visit of the beautiful Ponta de Piedade beach, St Anthony’s Church and Europe’s most powerful lighthouse. You’ll also witness a crucial part of history by visiting the continent’s first-ever slave market. Built in 1444, retrace the steps of the first-ever Africans imported to Europe to be sold.

Day 6: Golf or wellness centre?

How you decide to spend your penultimate day is entirely up to you. Just an eight-minute drive from your hotel is Boavista Golf & Spa Resort with its pristine, 18-hole championship golf course designed in 2002 by Howard Swan. Using the natural contours of the terrain, the course provides a tough challenge and a variety of holes bordered by beautiful, subtropical landscape.

If golf isn’t your thing, then you can take full advantage of the wellness centre at your hotel. Whether you want to use the heated outdoor pool, take advantage of the fully equipped Cascade Gym by AXN Club or enjoy a relaxing treatment in the spa such as a body scrub or couples’ massage.

Day 7: Depart

Drive back to Faro Airport where you will return your hire car and check-in for your flight back to the UK.

If you would like to book this amazing Algarve self-drive break, get in touch with your local Travel Counsellor.
*All information in this guide was verified and correct at the time of publishing. Some changes in services and customs may have occurred due to covid-19 restrictions. Please check for latest information with your Travel Counsellor before booking.