

## About the Algarve

The Algarve is the most southern region of Portugal and it's one of Europe's favourite holiday destinations well known for glorious year round sunshine and excellent sandy beaches. These vary from secluded coves with amazing cliffs to vast stretches of golden sand all sea washed by the fresh and clear Atlantic ocean. Inland you will find quaint villages barely touched by tourism.

Traces of the Moorish presence are still evident in the local architecture. The orange groves and blossoming almond trees add colour to this fertile region in contrast with the whitewashed traditional houses. Due to the mild nature of the weather the Algarve is ideal for many outdoor sporting activities such as water sports, golf in one of the numerous world-class golf courses, tennis, horse riding, and many more. The Algarve not only known for its cosmopolitan nightlife with many bars and clubs but also for the many waterside restaurants serving fresh fish and "cataplana" (a local shellfish speciality).

Algarve. Wherever you look, the colours of the mountains and sea are always with you, creating the impression of a water-colour dotted with highlights of gold, green and blue. The region is an extensive and pleasant one, with a Mediterranean climate, marked by the smell of the sea at low tide and the scent of wild flowers.

A stroll through the tangled web of narrow streets, alleys and steps to be found away from the coast is the best way of getting to know this part of the region. But you can also easily lose yourself in the vastness of the coastal strip. Here the backdrop is composed of some of Europe's most beautiful beaches, from where you can admire the rocky coastline and the playful shadows they cast on the sand.

After the enchantment of the landscape, you can discover the aromas and flavours of the traditional Algarve cuisine. The menu may consist of fish and shellfish, with such dishes as caldeirada de peixe (fish-stew) or cataplana de amêijoas (clams steamed in a copper pan), or you can enjoy the traditional mountain food of stewed chickpeas and cabbage. The range of choices will also include the famous regional delicacies, such as figs, almonds, carobs and the brandy made from the locally grown medronho (arbutus-berry), distilled up in the hills in old copper stills.

As you travel across the Algarve, amidst its hills and plains filled with places of great ecological interest, rich in biodiversity and ecosystems, you will feel as though you are passing through an area full of different traditions, unchanged for many centuries. The handicraft is skilfully manufactured by the local craftsmen, who make use of longstanding, ancestral techniques and produce an excellent range of pottery, woven baskets, copper and brass articles, or other pieces made of linen and jute.

Only a step away from the tranquil peace of the inland region is the excitement of the Algarve nightlife. Bars, discos, marinas and casinos guarantee visitors the very best kind of merrymaking.

The region's built heritage is something you cannot afford to miss. The architecture of the whitewashed houses, with their brightly-coloured mouldings and remarkably beautiful chimneys, the church belfries and the museums, all reveal particular memories of the ancestors of the Algarve people and help to make this such a special destination.

Also to be recommended is the range of outdoor sports that are available, whether you're playing golf on lush green courses or enjoying some physical exercise at some of the region's excellent facilities, whether you're on the coast or perhaps up in the hills, where, after the rigours of winter and even before the first signs of spring, the land is covered in a pinkish white blanket, produced by the blossom of the almond-trees scattered across the horizon.

This is the true portrait of an Algarve that you'll find waiting for you, all year round.