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secret

# portimãõ

municipality

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# portimão

First of all there's the blue sea and its gently lapping waves; then fine, golden sands framed by cliffs and rocks. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of an international tourism destination. This is the Algarve of beach holidays in the sun.

Portimão and its municipality have much more to offer though: a rich heritage of historical monuments; the eternal natural beauty of the Ria de Alvor; the charm of cultivated fields, of slopes covered with pine trees and wild flowers as you climb up into the hills of the "serra", your days in the Algarve thus gaining a whole new dimension.

## HISTORY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PORTIMÃO

Proof of a human presence in the locality since the Neolithic period is furnished by the extensive burial grounds at Alcalar and Monte Canelas and by other archaeological finds scattered across the municipality. The recent discovery at Vila Velha de Alvor of what are probably the remains of a village dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the archaeological and maritime artefacts recovered from the Arade river and the coastal areas of the municipality throw new light on the importance of the region during the period when Atlantic trade routes with the Mediterranean and North Africa were developing, following the emergence of Phoenician, Greek and Carthaginian trading posts.

Although theories that variously identify Portimão with Portus Hannibalis, Portus Magnus and Porcimunt remain controversial, there can be no doubt about the Roman presence in the city and the surrounding municipality. Amphorae, coins, fish-salting tanks, bronze objects, cisterns, sundry building materials, the remains of buildings at Vale de Arrancada, Montemar, Baralha and above all the major "villa" site at Abicada bear eloquent witness to this fact.

Evidence of the Arab presence in the area can be found in occasional finds of pottery and coins and in the influence it had on the distinctive shape of chimneys and water wheels, on buildings made of "taipa" (a mixture of clay, rubble, sand and lime) and marabouts, on the region's agriculture and some of the types of vegetation to be found.

Modern Portimão came into being in the reign of D. Afonso V (1463) with the granting of certain privileges to a settlement which would come to be called Vila Nova de Portimão and around which a ring of defensive walls would later be built. Portimão was ideally placed to enjoy the fruits of the boom in international trade stimulated by the great Portuguese voyages of discovery and prospered as a haven for ships plying the African coast.

The earthquake of 1755 destroyed much of the town and prompted an economic decline that was reversed only towards the end of the 19th century by the return of trade, exports of dried fruit, milling, fishing and the fish-canning industry, activities which would continue into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Portimão was made a city in 1924 by the then President of the Republic, the writer Manuel Teixeira Gomes, himself a native of Portimão.

In the last three decades tourism has been the motor driving Portimão's economy and the city can now claim to be the second most populous in the Algarve.

## VISITING PORTIMÃO

A white church on a hilltop, the narrow streets of the old fishermen's and tradesmen's quarter: these are some of the aspects that define the character of this centuries-old city, as well as the presence of the sea and the immense beach of Praia da Rocha.



Riverside area - LC

### MAIN CHURCH OF NOSSA SENHORA DA CONCEIÇÃO (OUR LADY OF THE CONCEPTION)

Situated on a hilltop, this church has for centuries been a distinctive feature of the city skyline. First built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> and extensively renovated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of the original structure all that remains is a fine Gothic doorway with decorated capitals, a gargoyle and buttresses. The interior consists of three naves. On the high altar is an impressive carved and gilded altarpiece with Baroque decoration. Among the various statues, that of St. Peter the Apostle (16<sup>th</sup> century) stands out, along with four crucifixes made of ivory and lignum vitae. There are holy water fountains in the Manueline style (16<sup>th</sup> century) and a dado of glazed tiles of various origins (17<sup>th</sup> century).

### JESUIT COLLEGE

This austere and majestic edifice was built on the orders of Diogo Gonçalves, a nobleman who made his fortune in the Far East and is buried in a tomb made of polychrome marble inside the church. Construction work continued from 1660 to 1707 and the church needed major repairs after the earthquake of 1755. The façade is made up of three sections. The section corresponding to the church is higher than the other two and has a curved pediment. The right-hand section has a Manueline doorway (16<sup>th</sup> century). The church, which is the biggest in the Algarve, consists of a single nave, like a large hall, and is typical of its kind. The high altar and lateral altars contain gilded carvings (beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) which are of interest for their profuse decoration, with a Renaissance statue of the Virgin and Child (16<sup>th</sup> century) and others dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The side altars contain a statue of Nossa Senhora da Piedade (Our Lady of Piety) and a crucifixion of Senhor Jesus dos Milagres (Lord Jesus of Miracles) (17<sup>th</sup> century). At the head of the nave, in a glass-fronted alcove, is a large-scale statue of Senhor dos Aflitos (The Lord of the Afflicted).



Jesuit College - LC

### CHAPEL OF SÃO JOSÉ (ST. JOSEPH)

This building, with its plain façade and curved pediment with pinnacles, is located in the old part of the city opposite the Largo da Barca, which was where the ferry across the river would dock in the days before the bridge was built.

### HISTORICAL CENTRE

All that is left of medieval Portimão are a few stretches of the city walls now hidden by houses. The old town is dominated by the architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: two storey houses, with wrought iron balconies and ornate stonework around windows and doors, decorated with balustrades of stone and ceramics, and walls covered with tiles. The old palace of the Viscounts of Bívar (18<sup>th</sup> century), a building of fine classical lines, is now home to the municipal council. To get a feel for the spirit of Portimão, there is nothing better than to sit in the shade of the trees in the Manuel Bívar gardens and while away the time, watching the fishing boats and pleasure craft motor pass, and to walk through streets and squares that typify an active, industrious town that has succeeded in keeping pace with progress.

### PRAIA DA ROCHA

Fine golden sands as far as the eye can see; calm turquoise waters; ochre cliffs and rocks sculpted into fantastical shapes: such is the natural beauty of Praia da Rocha, a place which inspires visitors today as it has always done. Discovered by tourism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was for decades the favoured resort of well-to-do families from Portimão, from the Algarve and Andalusia in summer, and of the English in winter. The Hotel da Bela Vista, with its architecture and decoration in the style of the French "Belle Époque", dates from this period. In the 1950s and 1960s, Praia da Rocha began to attract an increasingly international clientele and these days it is a cosmopolitan tourist centre and a byword throughout Europe for sun, sea and sand.



Praia da Rocha - HR



## SANTA CATARINA DE RIBAMAR FORTRESS (ST. CATHERINE OF RIBAMAR)

Along with the fort of St. John of Arade, across the water in Ferragudo, this fortification constituted Portimão's defences against raiding corsairs and pirates. Built in the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries in an excellent strategic position, it affords splendid views of the sea, river, beaches and cliffs: a great place to be at sunset. Inside there is an old chapel dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria.



## getting to know portimão municipality

### ALVOR

This town's long history is clear from the discovery on Vila Velha hill, overlooking the Ria de Alvor, of a Neolithic village retaining traces of subsequent Roman occupation. During the period of Moorish rule, Alvor was a thriving port. The ramparts defending it were the scene of violent fighting when the Portuguese army led by the king D. Sancho I conquered it in 1189, with the help of Crusaders en route to the Holy Land. Retaken by the Moors in 1191, it was only returned to Christian dominion in 1250, at the time of the campaigns that resulted in the conquest of the whole of the Algarve.

The town walls were rebuilt in 1300 and Alvor was made a town by the king D. Manuel I, immediately after the death of D. João V. It shared in the prosperity of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, but was badly damaged by the earthquake of 1755. The old town was never to regain its former splendour. It lost its status as a town at the time of the Marquês de Pombal and only regained it in 1938.

Alvor retains much of the charm of a picturesque fishing village, with streets of white houses and colourful boats which, after a day at sea, gather near the old fish market.

### MAIN CHURCH

Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this church was rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The profusely decorated main doorway - one of the most beautiful in the Algarve - and the side door are in the Manueline style. The columns supporting the three naves are also part of the original structure, as are the holy water fountains and the triumphal arch of the altar. The carved altarpiece on the high altar, with its impressive life-size statue of Christ, is from a later period (18<sup>th</sup> century). There is also a fine panel depicting the Saviour. The sacristy that adjoins the church is a former Moorish marabout, since adapted to its new role.

This small, but nonetheless important church also contains polychrome tiles with two 18<sup>th</sup> century figurative panels - the Washing of the Feet and the Last Supper - several statues and a number of tombs. From the churchyard there is an excellent view over the Ria de Alvor, the town and the sea all around.

### CASTLE

The castle has long disappeared but for two stretches of wall that were once part of the fortress and now have houses built against them.

### MARABOUT CHAPELS OF SÃO JOÃO AND SÃO PEDRO

(ST. JOHN AND ST. PETER)

Cubic structures with spherical cupolas that testify to the Moorish influence, these chapels evoke the holy places, where Moslems would bury the religious ascetics known as marabouts.



## ABICADA

### VILLA ROMANA DE ABICADA 09

A Roman archaeological site at the confluence of two rivers. There is a 1<sup>st</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century villa with several rooms and a peristyle decorated with coloured mosaics bearing geometric patterns and stylised designs.

## ALCALAR

### ALCALAR NEOLITHIC/CHACOLITHIC BURIAL GROUND 10

An important Neolithic/Chacolithic burial ground (2,000/1,600 B.C.) with graves of several types, from megalithic chambers to tombs with false cupolas and side alcoves. There is another burial ground nearby at Monte Canelas, where there are also some remains from the Roman period.



## MEXILHOEIRA GRANDE

An old village traditionally sustained by agriculture and by the resources of the Ria de Alvor.

### MAIN CHURCH 11

This church is in the Renaissance style (16<sup>th</sup> century) but has two side doors that are Manueline. The main doorway is very solemn, with a triangular pediment. The interior consists of three naves, supported by columns with ornate bases and capitals. The triumphal arch is decorated with motifs from the world of nature and a coat of arms. On the high altar, there is a panel depicting the Assumption. The Capela do Santíssimo (Chapel of the Most Holy), boasts a high relief showing the figure of the Eternal Father and a bas-relief of St. Peter and St. Paul. There is a collection of statues and objects used in religious ceremonies.

## THE RIA DE ALVOR

To one side the sea, to the other the liquid mirror of the vast estuary stretching inland, and between them a long, broad dune: this beautiful setting is the chosen nesting place of dozens of species of migratory bird. The salt marshes also support an interesting variety of animal life, while the local fishermen still use traditional techniques to catch fish and gather shellfish. To explore this almost unknown facet of the Algarve by the diffuse light of dawn is to discover a world of total calm, creating memories that will last forever. (Boats can be hired in Alvor).



## THE ARADE ESTUARY

For thousands of years, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, Normans and Crusaders sailed up the river towards the city of Silves, intent on trade or conquest. Visitors today can follow the same route in a boat hired from Portimão. The shady groves along the banks make good places to stop off and relax, as does the island of Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Our Lady of the Rosary), where the ruins of an old chapel are still to be seen.

## THE PLEASURES OF SUN AND SEA

Praia da Rocha may be the most famous resort in the area, but the beaches that extend all the way to Alvor have their own particular appeal.

### Vau

A charming beach flanked by cliffs. Its charming atmosphere, iodine-rich waters and fascinating rock formations make it popular with families.



## Três Irmãos e Prainha

A series of tiny beaches separated by outcrops of ochre rock in which the sea has worn tunnels that offer an unusual means of access.





## Alvor

A long beach that extends as far as the eye can see, until it reaches the Ria de Alvor estuary. An international tourist centre.



Alvor - HR

## BIG GAME FISHING AND MUCH MORE

Portimão is one of the main big game centres in the Algarve, offering the chance to catch fighting swordfish and other big fish. There are also facilities for sailing, windsurfing, parasailing, water-skiing and scuba diving. The golf course set among the pines of Penina is internationally renowned. With courses at Alvor and Vau too, keen golfers are spoilt for choice.

## TASTY LOCAL COOKING

Top of the list of gastronomic delights associated with Portimão are tasty, grilled sardines, to be had in any of the restaurants along the quayside. But there is more to Portimão's culinary repertoire than grilled sardines, served on a slice of homemade bread. Local starters, which give you a good idea about eating well in Portimão, include chard and purslane soups, white bean soup with sweet potato, bread and tomato soup - a favourite of the local fishermen - and "arjamolho" a refreshing soup that is ideal on hot days.

There is a plentiful choice of fish and seafood too. Cataplana, which takes its name from the traditional hinged copper vessels in which it is cooked; fish stew; Portimão-style clams; and bean and whelk stew made with large whelks, red beans and green peppers and seasoned with parsley and bay leaf. The maritime side of the menu also includes razor clam risotto, "carapau" (horse-mackerel) in a vinegar sauce, and fried baby cuttlefish, while rural flavours and produce take the fore in broad beans with fried fish, "papas de milho" (made from maize meal) with sausages or sea food, and Portimão-style peas.

Nor is there any shortage of cakes and desserts, many of which rely on a judicious combination of figs, almonds, sugar and eggs: "morgados", "dom-rodrigós", "bolas de ovo" and "figos cheios".

The Penina region of Portimão municipality even produces its own wines, whites and reds redolent of the hot summer sun.



Grilled Sardine - MV

## POPULAR CRAFTS

Wicker and cane baskets, hats, mats and baskets made of palm leaves and twisted "esparto" grasses, lace end embroidery, copper utensils, domestic and decorative earthenware: these are among the unassuming treasures that the craftsmen and women of Portimão and its municipality continue to make using traditional materials, motifs and techniques.

Stained-glass windows and porcelain ornaments are evidence of more recent trends in handicrafts and of an unflinching desire to work by hand to make things of beauty.



Cruiser - LC



# portimão



Old Bridge - LC



New Bridge - TA

Data sheet

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