

Information Pack

Vila Alecrim
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Algarve
Portugal



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1. Algarve

Portugal's sunny southern coast continues to cast its magic over all those who visit the area. The Algarve boasts around 100 miles of golden sandy coast washed clean by the azure Atlantic waters and is claimed, by some 320 days of annual sunshine. That's a pretty attractive proposition for a holiday destination especially when coupled with a reputation for being an international playground for sun worshippers and sporty types alike. Getting around is easy, the roads are good and it is almost impossible to get lost since practically all the coastal towns and villages lead off the main arterial route stretching from Cape Vincent in the West to Villa Real in the East. The Portuguese are a warm and hospitable people with a cuisine which owes much to its seafaring legacy. The sardines are legendary and the port superb. Combine this with picturesque villages, glorious beaches and a low cost of living and you are pretty well set for very, very good holiday.

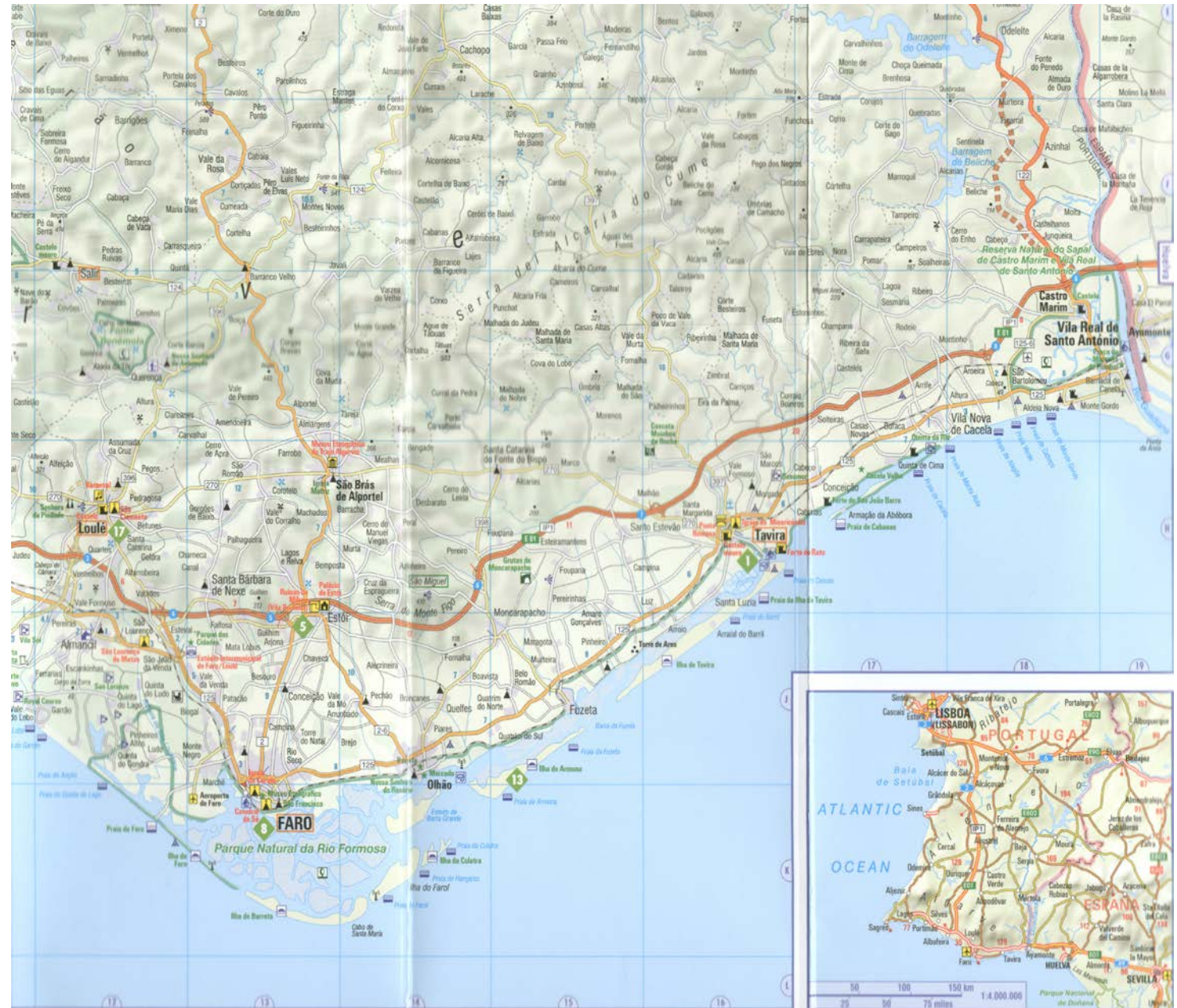


1.1 Eastern Algarve

The eastern Algarve has largely escaped the full-scale development suffered by the central swathe of the region, perhaps in part because of the relative inaccessibility of its most spectacular beaches, which lie offshore on the sandspit islands of Ilha de Tavira and Praia de Cabanas. The sandspits end at Manta Rota, though the impressive beaches continue from here right up to the Spanish border at Monte Gordo. The accessibility of these sands mean a corresponding level of development in an area that has always been popular with Spanish day-trippers.

This is perfect territory for those who want to spend some time on the sands, with pristine and relatively uncrowded beaches served by regular ferry services from Tavira, one of the Algarve's most attractive towns. Birdwatchers are drawn here too as the islands protect a system of lagoons forming part of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. However, with no fewer than seven new golf courses in the pipeline, the eastern Algarve has plenty to offer those looking to combine the sun with some sport.

Away from the coast, the scenery around the Serra de Alcaria remains wildly beautiful, though the area has recently been put on the tourist map with 2 new golf courses and mining theme park round Vaqueiros. Northeast of Monte Gordo, the beautiful Rio Guadiana marks the border with Spain and tour boats ply up from Vila Real to the picturesque village of Alcoudm.

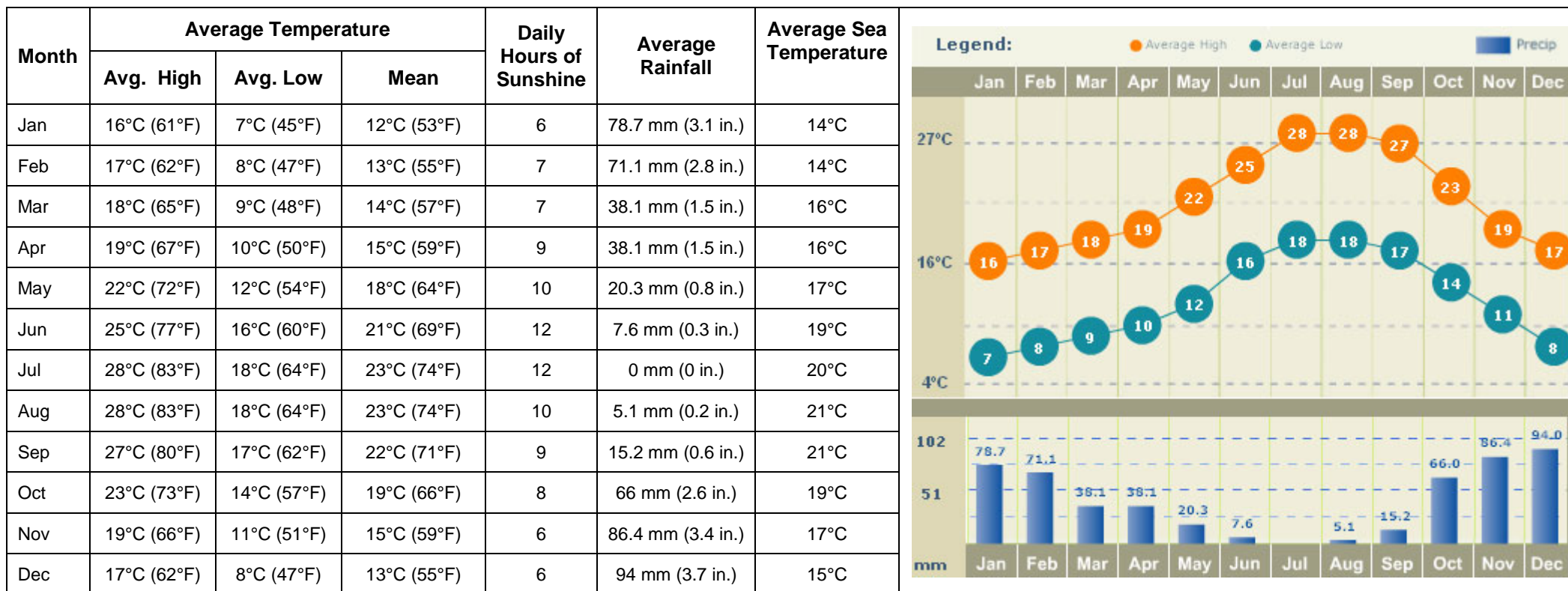


1.2 Algarve Climate

With over 3,000 hours of sun a year, the climate in the Algarve makes it a favourite holiday destination.

1.2.1 Monthly Averages for Tavira

The following chart shows the average temperature, daily hours of sunshine, average rainfall and average sea temperatures in Tavira for each month of the year:



* Reference: <http://www.weather.com>

Just to make you envious, take a look at:

Weather in Tavira today: <http://gostay.biz/weather/tavira/now.html>

Weather averages in Tavira: <http://gostay.biz/weather/tavira/average.html>

2. Villa Information

2.1 Villa Features & Details

- Detached villa with private swimming pool and parking.
- Villa, swimming pool, patio, barbecue area, garden and parking area are situated in a 1600 metre squared private enclosure (54 metres by 30 metres).
- 4 bedrooms: 1 double bedroom and 3 twin bedrooms, all with built in wardrobes.
- Lounge with digital satellite (freesat), 32" flat-screen LCD TV, DVD player and CD / radio stereo.
- Kitchen with full sized electric oven, gas hob with 4 rings, dishwasher, fridge-freezer, microwave, toaster, kettle, washing machine, ironing board and iron.
- 2 eating / dining areas: table & chairs in kitchen and dining table & chairs at the side of the lounge.
- 1 bathroom downstairs, 1 shower room with toilet and wash-basin upstairs (bathroom towels and hair dryer provided).
- Private swimming pool: 10 metres by 5 metres (Shallow End: 1m 20cm, Deep End: 2m).
The swimming pool light is set on a timer to come on automatically in the evening.
- Large tiled patio area with tables, chairs, sun-beds and sun-umbrellas.
- Built in barbecue.
- External lights covering patio and barbecue area.
- Maid service and pool cleaning service.
- 2 ½ miles from centre of Tavira, one of the Algarve's most beautiful towns.
- 3 ½ miles from fabulous stretch of sandy beach of Tavira Island (Ilha de Tavira), one of the most beautiful and extensive of the sandspit beaches in the Algarve that can be accessed by a short and enjoyable ferry ride, or by a toy train from the neighbouring holiday village of Pedras d'el Rei.
- 3 Golf courses nearby: Benamor (3 miles from villa), Quinta da Ria (8 miles from villa) and Quinta de Cima (8 miles from villa).
- 25 miles from Faro Airport.
- Restaurants: variety of local restaurants and some international restaurants in Tavira, with excellent and well renowned fish restaurants in nearby Santa Luzia.
- Shops: some antique, ceramic and gift shops and a several boutiques in Tavira.
- Nightlife: the Docas Bars, Bubibar and Ubi Discotheque are popular nightspots, and there are several bars beside the river and throughout Tavira town.
- Public Transport: Some 15 trains and at least 8 express buses run daily between Faro and Tavira (30 to 50 minutes).

Set in a quiet location, amidst acres of orange groves near the Gilao River and Natural waterfalls at Monihos da Rocha. The villa is situated 2 ½ miles north from the centre of Tavira, one of the Algarve's loveliest towns, which although popular, has retained its ancient architecture and tree shaded squares. The villa is ideal for a family or golfing group seeking a relaxing holiday. From a tranquil base, there is much to enjoy. Cultural strolls around Tavira, or ferry boat trips to fantastic beaches on offshore islands. Leisurely drives through the countryside or jaunt across the border to savour the Splendour in Seville.

The villa has marbles tiles throughout the ground floor. The lounge/diner is comfortably furnished with a sofa, 2 armchairs, dining table and chairs, an open fireplace, satellite TV and DVD player and has access onto the patio. There is a super private swimming pool to refresh sun-scorched bodies, and to the side of the patio there is a built-in barbecue ideal for those group evening meals with grilled sardines washed down with local wine. There are two ground floor bedrooms, a twin plus a double. These share a bathroom. Upstairs, there are two twin bedrooms and a

shower room with toilet and wash basin. All bedrooms have built-in wardrobes. The Kitchen is equipped with an electric oven, gas hob with 4 rings, fridge-freezer, dishwasher, microwave and washing machine.

Tranquillity, relaxation, unspoilt countryside, an enchanting town and sensational beaches are all to be found in and around the villa.

2.2 Villa Pictures

2.2.1 Villa, Swimming Pool and Patio





2.2.2 Villa Entrance



2.2.3 Swimming Pool (10m x 5m, Shallow End: 1m 20cm Deep End: 2m)





2.2.4 Villa at night



2.2.5 Living Room (Sofa, TV and DVD Player)



2.2.6 Kitchen



2.2.7 Breakfast Bar / Pantry



2.2.8 Downstairs Bedrooms



2.2.9 Downstairs Bathroom



2.2.10 Barbeque During the evening



2.3 Frequently Asked Questions

2.3.1 Swimming Pool

- Q.** Does the villa have a private swimming pool?
- A.** Yes. The villa has a large exclusive private swimming pool.
- Q.** How big is the swimming pool?
- A.** The swimming pool is 10 metres by 5 metres. The shallow end is 1 metre 20cm in depth and the deep end is 2 metres in depth. Most new builds and most of the villas in the Algarve have swimming pools that are a lot smaller than ours.

2.3.2 Location

- Q.** What is the privacy like at the villa?
- A.** Please take a look at the picture included with instruction 9 in section 2.5.1. Our villa is situated at the end of the road. There are six other villas on the same road, one of which can just about overlook the pool from its upstairs back bedroom when the boundary plants and trees are cut back and shortened.

This villa is situated to the left hand side of the wall and plants in the picture in section 2.2.3 and the visibility is limited. You can just about see this villa in the corner of the picture in section 2.2.4. When the boundary trees are at full flight and the flowers are fully booming then the next door neighbour is unable to overlook the pool.

Overall, the villa is well positioned and the privacy is very good.

2.2.3 Equipment

- Q.** Do you provide any baby equipment?
- A.** Unfortunately, we do not provide any baby cots or baby equipment at the villa. You will need to take a travel cot with you.
- Q.** Do you provide towels at the villa?
- A.** Bathroom towels are provided but not beach towels.
- Q.** Does the villa have fans and air conditioning?
- A.** There are ceiling fans in the living room and downstairs bedrooms and osculating fans in the upstairs bedrooms which are sufficient for keeping you cool. There is no air conditioning in the villa.

2.3.4 Transfers

- Q.** Do you arrange transfers from the airport?
- A.** We do not arrange transfers from the airport. There are tens and tens of taxis available from the taxi rank outside Faro airport, so arranging a taxi before arrival is not necessary. It takes about 25 minutes to get from the airport to the villa. Please refer to section 2.4 for directions on how to get to Vila Alecrim from the airport. Taxis from the airport to the villa cost between 40 to 50 Euros.

On your return to Faro airport I suggest using one for the following taxis (remember to put 00351 in front of number if using a British mobile from the villa):

- Orlandino: 917 882 752
- Vitor Guerreiro: 917 330 513 (Fax: 281 324 461, Email: taxigilao@sapo.pt for reservations)

2.3.5 Suitability

- Q.** I would like to take my girlfriend / boyfriend away for a well earned break. Would the villa be suitable for us?
- A.** I couldn't think of a better place to take your girlfriend / boyfriend :) Read any tour guide. They all say the same thing. Tavira is the most beautiful town in the Algarve. You'll have plenty of privacy at the villa and if you are looking for a romantic setting then Tavira is an ideal choice.

Situated 25 miles east of Faro, Tavira is the most attractive town in the Algarve and, with a wide range of attractions and restaurants, makes the best base in the east. Its local beach is on the Ilha de Tavira, one of the most beautiful and extensive of the sandpit beaches that can be reached by ferry, or by toy train from the neighbouring holiday village of Pedras d'el Rei. Set on both sides of the gently flowing Rio Gilao, Tavira is a graceful little town of fine white mansions with hipped terracotta roofs and wrought-iron balconies, topped by a neat little castle and a historic Roman bridge.

2.3.6 Arriving and Departing (Checking In and Checking Out)

- Q.** What is the earliest time I can arrive (check in) at the villa?
- A.** 4pm
- Q.** What is the latest time I can depart (check out) at the villa?
- A.** 11am
- Q.** My plane arrives early or my plane departs late. Can arrangements be made to leave my luggage somewhere?
- A.** Guests must arrive after 4.00 pm and depart before 11.00 am. This time gap is needed for the maid to clean and prepare the villa for the following guests. If your plane departs in the evening or you arrive in the early morning / early afternoon then arrangements can be made for you to leave your luggage at the villa or leave your luggage with the villa manager (the manager lives in the villa next to our villa).
- Q.** What is the latest time I can check in?
- A.** You can check in at any time. Just let us know your travel arrangements beforehand.

2.3.7 Management

- Q.** Who manages Vila Alecrim?
- A.** Richard Friend, an English expat who lives in the adjacent villa, is the Manager of Vila Alecrim. He will provide you with the keys of the villa on arrival. If you should encounter any problems during your stay at the villa, please inform Richard.

2.3.8 Health

- A.** Do I need to worry about Mosquitoes?
- Q.** Mosquito nets are provided on windows, but I advise you to take your own mosquito repellent and plugs, especially in peak season. Try to use a mosquito repellent that has 90% to 100% deet content.
- Q.** Is the water safe to drink?
- A.** The water at the villa is drinkable, but I suggest you buy bottled water from the supermarket.

2.3.9 Other Accommodation

Q. I would like to stay in the Tavira area for a longer period than the availability that you can offer. Can you recommend anywhere else that I can stay?

A. For other accommodation in Tavira take a look at <http://www.portugal-info.net/algarve/tavira.htm>. The apartments / hotels listed on this website are however located in more developed areas.

There is a lady who lives in a villa located near ours. She rents the upper section of her villa as an apartment. Suitability will depend on how many of you will be going. More information about this apartment can be found at <http://www.casadosamigos.com>

There is also a number of hotels / inns in and around Tavira (<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=Inns+Tavira>). I haven't stayed in any of them so I can't really give any useful feedback.

Most of the accommodation listed above will probably not be able to give you the same kind of value and personal service as we can though :)

2.3.10 Starter Pack

A. Will there be any food or drink available at the villa when I arrive?

Q. A small starter pack with a few items including water, milk, bread, butter, wine, beer etc will be provided.

2.3.11 Local Events in Tavira

A. Where can I find out more information about local events during my stay?

Q. For information about events during your stay visit the Tourist Information Centre as shown on map of Tavira provided in section 3.5.

2.4 Getting to Vila Alecrim

The address of the villa is as follows:

Vila Alecrim
Estrado Meio Arreia
Balieira
8800 Tavira
Algarve
Portugal



2.4.1 Getting to Vila Alecrim from Faro Airport by Car

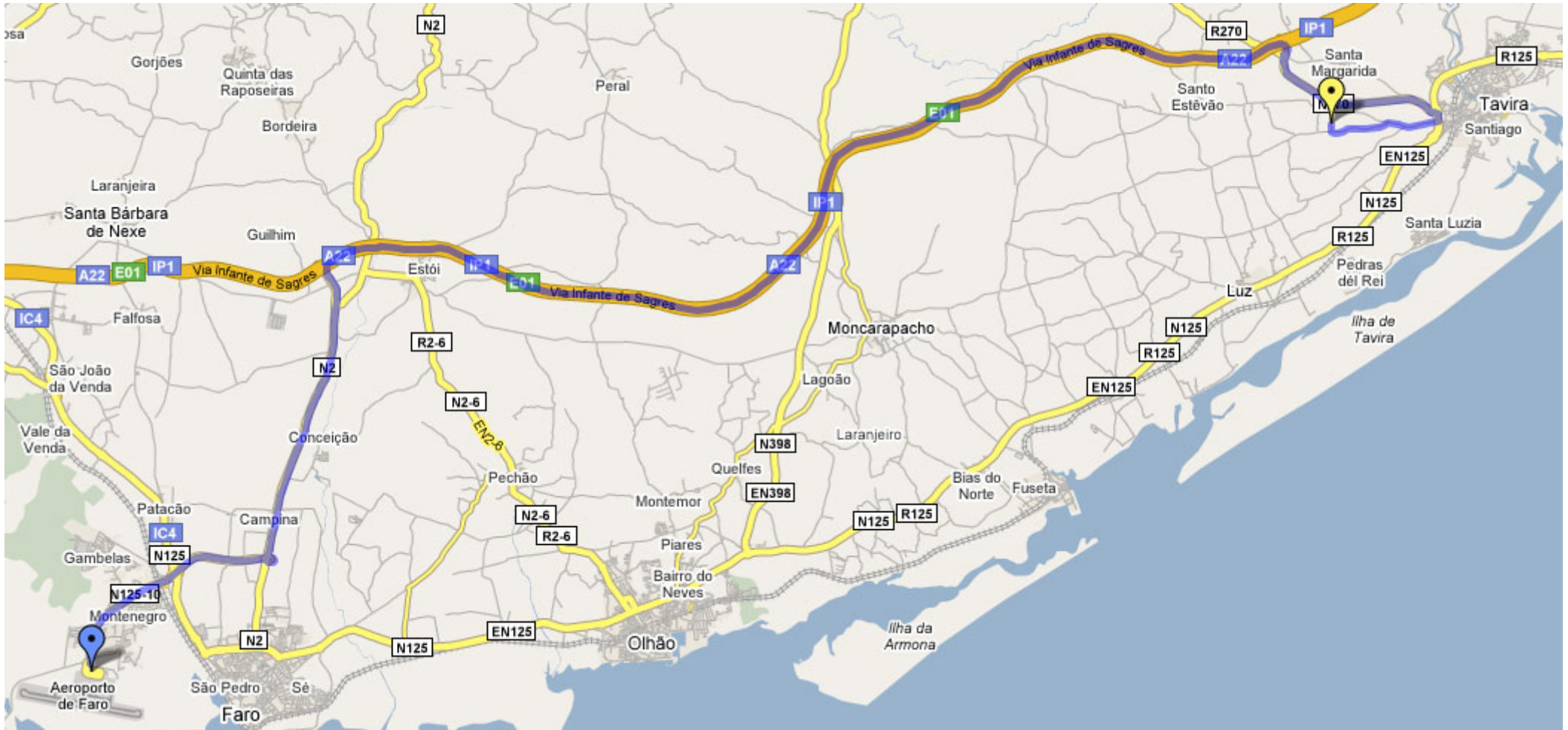
The easiest way to get to Vila Alecrim is to hire a car at Faro Airport. There are tens of vehicle hire companies located by Faro Airport.

The directions for getting to the villa from Faro airport are as follows:

1. Exit the airport and follow the main road (for approx. 2 miles) to the end where you will go round a very sharp right hand bend.
2. This bend will lead you onto a lower road. Continue along this road, through two sets of traffic lights (for approx. 5 miles). Prior to approaching a fly over bridge you will see a blue sign marked with "A22 ESPANHA" pointing to a slip road on the right. Turn onto this slip road and join the A22.
3. Follow the A22 (for approx 15 miles) until you come to the TAVIRA junction. Turn off at this junction and follow the slip road until you come to a roundabout where there are several coloured flags. Take the second exit on this roundabout which is signposted towards TAVIRA.
4. Follow this road until you approach a roundabout with a sail on it. Take the first exit onto the N125. Continue on the N125 for approx 200 metres and take the first exit signposted towards Santo Estevao

5. Continue for approx 1 mile. Take the second turning on your left.
6. Continue for approx 1 mile until you approach a white wall with the sign “CASA DOS AMIGOS”. Continue for another 30 metres and take the next right turning. This turning will lead you onto a short road about 100 metres long with 5 villas on it. Vila Alecrim is the last one on the end (through the double gates as shown in the picture below).





Above route can be viewed in more detail via Google Maps by going to:

- <http://www.gostay.biz/map1.html> - Faro Airport to Tavira
- <http://www.gostay.biz/map2.html> - Larger scale map of Tavira area

You can familiarise yourself with the 25 mile journey from Faro airport to the villa by clicking on the satellite view and zooming in to various sections of the route (just follow the blue line - "Getting to Vila Alecrim from Faro Airport by Car").

2.4.2 Using Public Transport

Frequent buses go from Faro Airport (Faro Airport bus stop is directly outside Faro Airport) to Faro Train Station and Faro Bus Station.

There are 15 trains running daily between Faro and Tavira (€1.60, 35 to 50 minutes) and 11 to Vila Real de Santo Antonio (€1.20, 35 minutes).

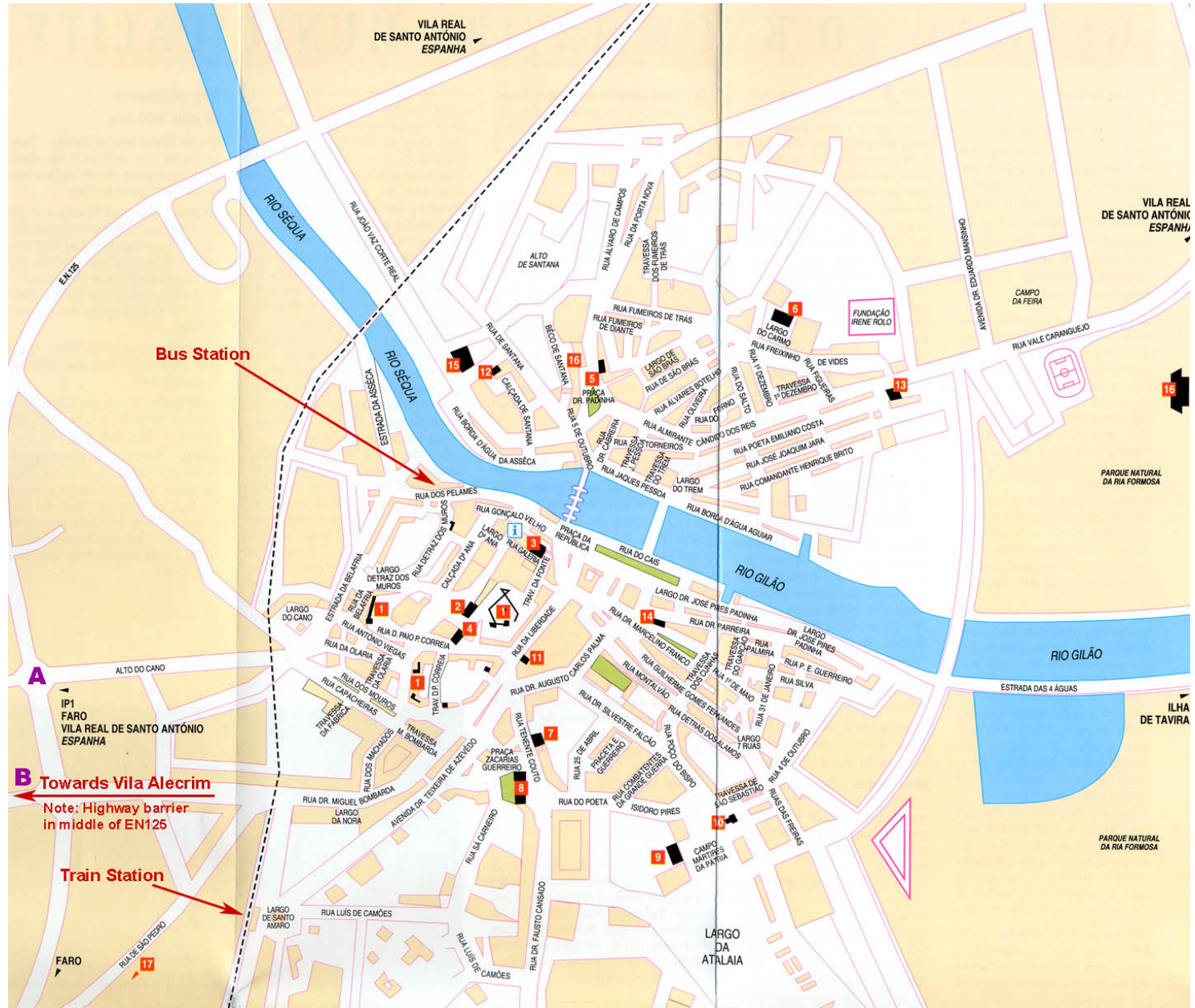
Frequent buses, including 8 express runs go to Faro (€2.20, 30 minutes) and Vila Real de Santo (€2.10, 40 minutes).

There are a dozen runs, including five alta qualidade (fast deluxe) services to Lisbon (€14, 5 hours). You can get to Huelva (Spain) twice daily for €4.10 (2 hours) with onward connections to Seville (€9.80, 3 hours).

2.4.2.1 The Trans-Algarve Train Time Table - Lagos to Vila Real de St. Antonio

| Categoria | | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | IR | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | IC | R | R | R | R | R | IC | R | R | IR | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|
| Número | | 5703 | 5705 | 5901 | 5707 | 5903 | 5709 | 5735 | 5905 | 5711 | 5801 | 5907 | 5713 | 5803 | 5715 | 5909 | 5717 | 5719 | 5805 | 5721 | 5911 | 5723 | 5725 | 581 | 5727 | 5913 | 5729 | 5915 | 5731 | 5907 | 571 | 5733 | 5809 | 5701 | |
| Classe | | 1-2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | 2 | 1-2 | |
| Serviços Disponibilizados: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Observações | | Ⓜ | Ⓜ | Ⓜ | Ⓜ | | | Ⓜ | | Ⓜ | | Ⓜ | | | | | | Ⓜ | | | | Ⓜ | | | | Ⓜ | | | | | Ⓜ | | | | |
| Lagos | P | | | 6:06 | | 6:55 | | | | 8:20 | | 9:00 | 9:58 | 11:35 | | 12:30 | | | | 13:58 | | 15:07 | | | | | | | | | | | | 22:45 | |
| Méia Praia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Odeátere | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mexilhoeira Grande | | | | 6:13 | | 7:02 | | | | 8:27 | | 9:10 | 10:05 | 11:45 | | 12:39 | | | | 14:05 | | 15:13 | | | | | | | | | | | | 22:52 | |
| Portimão | | | | 6:22 | | 7:11 | | | | 8:39 | | 9:20 | 10:14 | 11:54 | | 12:48 | | | | 14:17 | | 15:16 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:01 | |
| Ferragudo | | | | 6:27 | | 7:16 | | | | 8:45 | | 9:25 | 10:19 | 12:01 | | 12:54 | | | | 14:24 | | 15:25 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:06 | |
| Estômbar-Lagoa | | | | 6:31 | | 7:18 | | | | 8:50 | | 9:29 | 10:21 | 12:01 | | 12:58 | | | | 14:24 | | 15:30 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:10 | |
| Silves | | | | 6:39 | | 7:28 | | | | 9:06 | | 9:37 | 10:31 | 12:09 | | 13:10 | | | | 14:31 | | 15:34 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:17 | |
| Poço Barreto | | | | 6:44 | | 7:28 | | | | 9:12 | | | 10:31 | 12:09 | | 13:16 | | | | 14:31 | | 15:45 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:17 | |
| Alcantarilha | | | | 6:49 | | 7:38 | | | | 9:17 | | 9:46 | 10:40 | 12:18 | | 13:21 | | | | 14:40 | | 15:54 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:23 | |
| Algoz | | | | 6:54 | | 7:43 | | | | 9:23 | | 9:51 | 10:45 | 12:24 | | 13:27 | | | | 14:45 | | 15:59 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:32 | |
| Tunes | C | | | 6:59 | | 7:48 | | | | 9:29 | | 9:56 | 10:50 | 12:29 | | 13:33 | | | | 14:50 | | 16:04 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23:38 | |
| Tunes | P | | | 7:02 | | 7:56 | | | | 9:36 | | 10:00 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:06 | | 17:31 | | | | | | | | | | 23:46 | |
| Albufeira | | | | 7:08 | | 8:02 | | | | 9:42 | | 10:06 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 | |
| Patá | | | | 7:14 | | 8:08 | | | | 9:48 | | 10:12 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Boliqueime | | | | 7:18 | | 8:11 | | | | 9:50 | | 10:14 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Vale de Judeu | | | | 7:24 | | 8:18 | | | | 9:56 | | 10:20 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Loulé | | | | 7:32 | | 8:22 | | | | 9:59 | | 10:23 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Vale Formoso | | | | 7:37 | | 8:26 | | | | 10:03 | | 10:27 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Almansil-Nexe | | | | 7:42 | | 8:31 | | | | 10:08 | | 10:32 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| São João da Venda | | | | 7:45 | | 8:34 | | | | 10:11 | | 10:35 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Faro | C | | | 7:53 | | 8:40 | | | | 10:17 | | 10:41 | | | | | | | | 14:50 | | 16:12 | | 17:36 | | | | | | | | | | | 23:52 |
| Faro | P | | | 6:16 | | 7:25 | | | | 8:00 | | 8:53 | 9:20 | 10:22 | | 11:38 | | | | 12:21 | | 13:28 | | 14:18 | 15:00 | 16:12 | | | | | | | | 0:36 | |
| Bom João | | | | 6:19 | | 7:28 | | | | 8:03 | | 8:56 | 9:23 | 10:25 | | 11:41 | | | | 12:24 | | 13:31 | | 14:21 | 15:03 | 16:15 | | | | | | | | 0:45 | |
| Olhão | | | | 6:27 | | 7:38 | | | | 8:11 | | 9:04 | 9:33 | 10:33 | | 11:49 | | | | 12:24 | | 13:31 | | 14:21 | 15:03 | 16:15 | | | | | | | | 0:53 | |
| Fuzeta-A | | | | 6:36 | | 7:47 | | | | 8:20 | | 9:13 | 9:42 | 10:42 | | 11:58 | | | | 12:42 | | 13:49 | | 14:39 | 15:19 | 16:35 | | | | | | | | 1:03 | |
| Fuzeta | | | | 6:42 | | 7:54 | | | | 8:27 | | 9:18 | 9:51 | 10:45 | | 11:61 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:11 | |
| Livramento | | | | 6:46 | | 7:59 | | | | 8:31 | | 9:22 | 9:55 | 10:49 | | 12:05 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:19 | |
| Luz | | | | 6:50 | | 8:04 | | | | 8:36 | | 9:25 | 9:59 | 10:53 | | 12:09 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:26 | |
| Tavira | | | | 7:00 | | 8:12 | | | | 8:42 | | 9:34 | 10:06 | 11:01 | | 12:17 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:34 | |
| Porta Nova | | | | 7:07 | | 8:20 | | | | 8:49 | | 9:41 | 10:13 | 11:08 | | 12:24 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:42 | |
| Conceição | | | | 7:13 | | 8:26 | | | | 8:55 | | 9:47 | 10:19 | 11:14 | | 12:30 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:50 | |
| Nora | | | | 7:20 | | 8:33 | | | | 9:02 | | 9:54 | 10:26 | 11:21 | | 12:37 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 1:58 | |
| Caçela | | | | 7:24 | | 8:37 | | | | 9:06 | | 9:58 | 10:30 | 11:25 | | 12:41 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 2:06 | |
| Aroeira | | | | 7:28 | | 8:41 | | | | 9:10 | | 10:02 | 10:34 | 11:29 | | 12:45 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 2:14 | |
| Castro Marim | | | | 7:33 | | 8:46 | | | | 9:15 | | 10:07 | 10:39 | 11:34 | | 12:50 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 2:22 | |
| Monte Gordo | | | | 7:37 | | 8:50 | | | | 9:20 | | 10:12 | 10:44 | 11:39 | | 12:55 | | | | 12:44 | | 13:51 | | 14:41 | 15:23 | 16:38 | | | | | | | | 2:30 | |
| V. Real de St. António | C | | | 7:37 | | 8:41 | | | | 9:59 | | 10:30 | 11:26 | 12:22 | | 13:38 | | | | 14:30 | | 15:23 | | 16:12 | 17:24 | 18:38 | | | | | | | 2:38 | | |

2.4.3 Getting to Vila Alecrim from Tavira Bus Station / Train Station



The directions for getting to Vila Alecrim from Tavira (Bus Station / Train Station) are as follows:

- A.** Head towards the roundabout (point A on map below). At the roundabout take the third exit (signposted towards Santo Estevao) onto the N125 (for approx. 200 metres).



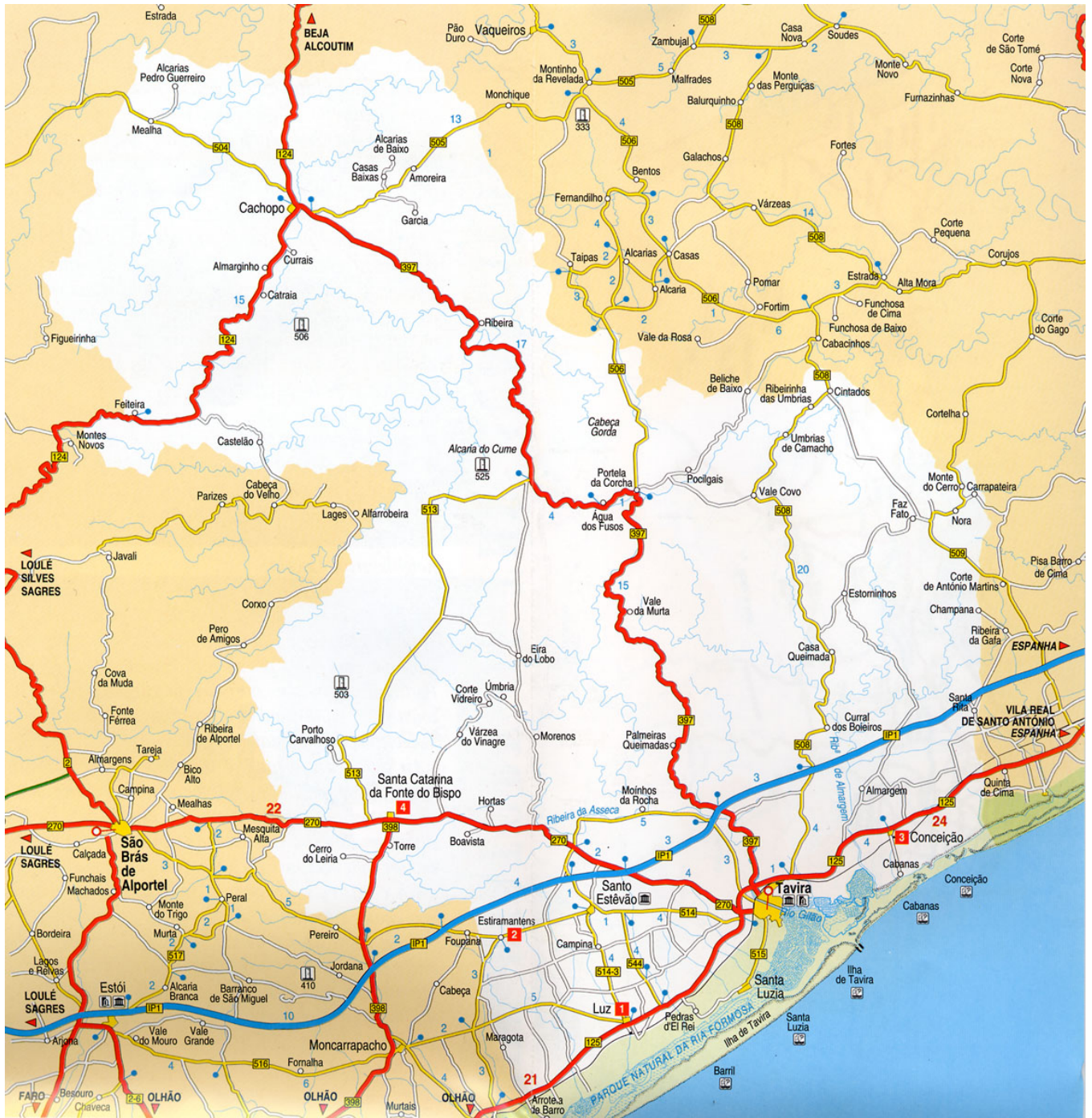
Above route can be viewed in more detail via Google Maps by going to <http://www.gostay.biz/map2.html>

- B.** Take the first right exit off the N125.
- C.** Take the second turning on your left.
- D.** Continue for approx 1 mile until you approach a white wall with the sign “CASA DOS AMIGOS”. Continue for another 30 metres and take the next right turning. This turning will lead you onto a short road about 100 metres long with 5 villas on it. Vila Alecrim is the last one on the end (through the double gates).

2.4.4 Key Collection

Richard Friend, an English expat who lives in the adjacent villa, is the Manager of Vila Alecrim. He will provide you with the keys of the villa on arrival.

3. Tavira Municipality



3.1 Introduction



Situated 30km east of Faro, Tavira is the most attractive town in the Algarve and, with a wide range of attractions and restaurants, makes the best base in the east. Its local beach is on the Ilha de Tavira, one of the most beautiful and extensive of the sandspit beaches that can be reached by ferry, or by toy train from the neighbouring holiday village of Pedras d'el Rei. A more traditional village lies even closer in the picturebook fishing port of Santa Luzia, a couple of kilometres to the west, rightly famed for its excellent seafood. In summer Tavira attracts a mixed bag of holidaying families and backpackers, while in autumn a sportier set moves in, attracted by the new golf course at nearby Benamor. Tavira is well served by buses and also lies on the main Faro to Vila Real rail line.

Set on both sides of the gently flowing Rio Gilao, Tavira is a graceful little town of fine white mansions with hipped terracotta roofs and wrought-iron balconies, topped by a neat little castle. There is the inevitable ring of new apartments radiating outwards, but the old centre retains a decayed nobility complemented by the lively fishing trade along the riverfront.

The earliest remains, including parts of the pedestrianized bridge over the river, date from the Roman settlement of Balsa. The town's current name, however, derives from the Moorish title Tabira, and it was the Moors who established the trading links with North Africa that led the town to be a major commercial port until well into the seventeenth century. Tavira lost importance when the Rio Gilao began to silt up, and much of the town was flattened by the Great Earthquake of 1755. The graceful old town was rebuilt at the end of the eighteenth century, but Tavira never regained its importance and survived mainly as a centre for the tuna fishing trade until tourism took over as the main source of income in the 1970s.

Fishing continues to be important, however, and fish dinners at restaurants along the palm-lined river are a justifiable reason to stop. However, most people linger because of the superb island beach at the Ilha de Tavira. Ferries shuttle out to the island from the centre of town in summer, and all year round from nearby Quatro Aguas.

Beautiful empty beaches with sands that go on forever. Fields of orange trees, heavy with the cent of blossom. Then hills of fig and almond trees and houses with dazzling whitewashed walls and distinctive chimneys decorated to resemble the fine tracery of lace. And, last of all, the great open spaces of the hills, where eagles soar, birds sing and flowers bloom. This is just a hint of the charms of Tavira and its municipality, and invitation to come and find out more.

3.2 *The History of the Municipality*

The existence of hill forts and megalithic monuments dates the human presence in Tavira municipality to the Neolithic period (4,000 to 1,500 B.C.). In the Chalcolithic and subsequent periods this presence was associated with the mining operations that flourished in the Northeast of the Algarve and with trading links with the Mediterranean.

It was on the coast however that the largest settlement grew up after the Roman conquest (1st century B.C.), thanks to the economic importance of fishing and the fish-salting industry. The major town of Balsa, situated near to Tavira and connected by road to Ossonoba (Faro) and Baesuris (Castro Marim), dates from this period.

Under Moorish rule (8th to 13th centuries), the strategic importance of Tavira's castle and port made it one of the biggest towns in the Algarve. It was the Knights of the order of Sant'Iago (St. James) who occupied Tavira in 1242, continuing the Christian reconquest that began with the taking of neighbouring Cacula.

The conquest first of Ceuta (1415) and then other towns of North Africa had a decisive influence on Tavira's fortunes in the 15th and 16th centuries, as it became the chief port providing support for the Portuguese garrisons overseas. During this period the town received a number of royal visits and in 1520 it was elevated to the status of city.

An outbreak of plague in 1645/46, the gradual silting up of the channel to sea, which eventually prevented vessels entering the harbour, and the damage done by the earthquake of 1755 were all factors in a decline which left Tavira by the end of the 18th century with only a fraction of its former economic importance.

Tuna fishing – for which Tavira was the Algarve's main port – and the canning industry breathed fresh life into the city from the last decades of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century. Today Tavira is a growing city, its renewed prosperity on tourism and fishing.

3.3 *Historical Centre*

In the 1500s, Tavira was the most popular city in the Algarve and a port of great strategic importance. The events of that period have left an enduring mark on the layout and appearance of the city.

Vestiges of that glorious past are still to be seen in some streets, such as Rua dos Pelames, where 16th century houses gaze at their reflections in the waters of the Gilao, or the corner house on Rua Nova da Avenida, with its fine Renaissance window. It is also visible in the delicate double window on Travessa de D. Brites, in the doorways of Calcada da Corujeira and Rua de Sao Bras, in the magnificent porch of what was the Monastery of Bernardas. But it is the Renaissance medallions of the Lady and the Knight on the façade of a building on Rua Jose Pires Padrinha that evoke better than anything else those far-off days of pageantry, elegance and courtly love.

After Renaissance Tavira it is time to get to know the city of the baroque period, a Tavira to be seen in the many noble houses hidden away down narrow streets or standing proudly on the banks of the river, with their distinctive triangular roofs sloping to a point – known as “tesouro” (treasure) roofs – and their finely-carved stonework.

Tavira also owes its appeal to the river and its reflections, to the changing nuances of the light and the special atmosphere of a town built on the water's edge. The ancient bridge which has for centuries joined the two halves of the city is the perfect place to stand and watch the river flow by.

Tavira's streets have another secret waiting to be discovered in the latticed doors, made of finely interwoven lengths of wood, which evoke the Moorish inheritance that persists in Algarvean culture to this day.

3.4 *Orientation*

Most of Tavira's important buildings, shops and facilities lie on the west bank of the Rio Gilao, though there are plenty of good restaurants and bars on the east bank. The bus terminal (tel 281 322 546) is on the west side by the river just north of the centre, two minutes' walk to the pedestrianized bridge and the main square, Praca da Republica. In front of here lie the riverfront gardens leading up to the main road bridge and the old market building, now a cultural centre. Beyond, fishing boats line the riverfront up to a third bridge, a flyover taking traffic east; for Quatro Aguas, head under the flyover and follow the river.

The train station is 1km north of the Praca da Republica, straight up the Rua da Liberdade, at the end of Avenida Dr. Mateus Teixeira de Azevedo. Up the steps just off Praca da Republica is the turismo, at Rua da Galeria 9.

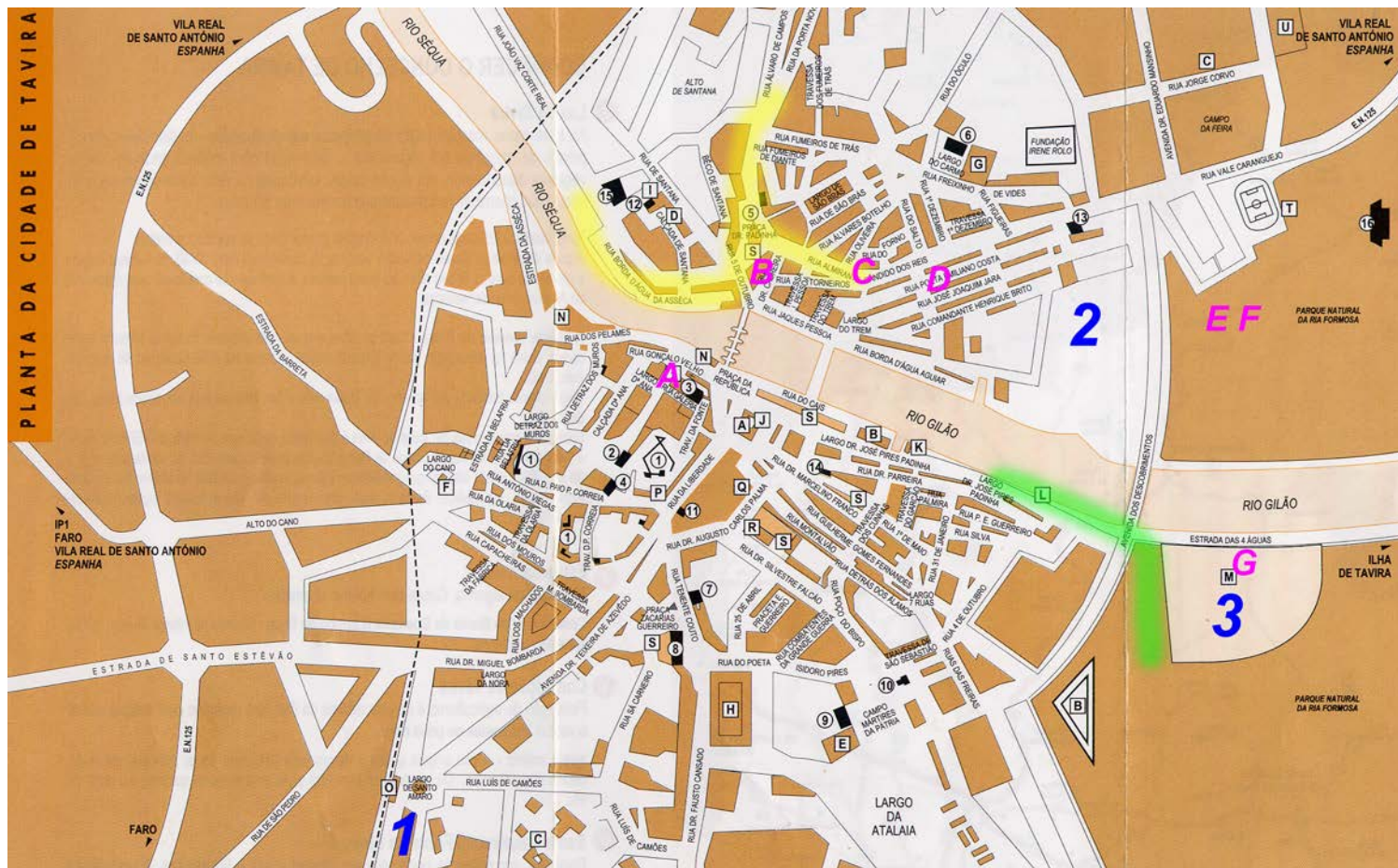
3.5 Maps of Tavira

Mapa da Cidade City Map

- 1 - Castelo
- 2 - Igreja S. Maria do Castelo
- 3 - Igreja da Misericórdia
- 4 - Igreja de Santiago
- 5 - Igreja de São Paulo
- 6 - Igreja do Carmo
- 7 - Igreja de S. José do Hospital
- 8 - Igreja de São Francisco
- 9 - Igreja de Santo António
- 10 - Capela de S. Sebastião
- 11 - Capela de N.S. da Consolação
- 12 - Capela de Santa Ana
- 13 - Capela de N.S. do Livramento
- 14 - Capela de S. Pedro Gonçalves Temo
- 15 - Museu de Arte
- 16 - Forte do Rato
- 17 - Capela do Calvário
- 18 - Terminal de Autocarros
- 19 - Estação de Comboios
- 20 - Novo Mercado
- 21 - Polícia
- 22 - Correios
- 23 - Câmara Municipal
- 24 - Pavilhão Desportivo
- 25 - Estádio
- 26 - Cinema
- 27 - Palácio da Galeria
- 28 - Arquivo Histórico
- 29 - Mercado da Ribeira
- 30 - Piscinas Municipais



- 1 - Castle
- 2 - Church S. Maria do Castelo
- 3 - Church of the Misericórdia
- 4 - Church of the Santiago
- 5 - Church of the São Paulo
- 6 - Church of the Carmo
- 7 - Church of the S. José do Hospital
- 8 - Church of the São Francisco
- 9 - Church of the Santo António
- 10 - Chapel of the São Sebastião
- 11 - Chapel of the N. S. da Consolação
- 12 - Chapel of the Santa Ana
- 13 - Chapel of the N. S. do Livramento
- 14 - Chapel of the S. Pedro Gonçalves Temo
- 15 - Art Museum
- 16 - Rato Fort
- 17 - Chapel of the Calvário
- 18 - Coach terminal
- 19 - Train station
- 20 - New market
- 21 - Police
- 22 - Post office
- 23 - City Hall
- 24 - Pavilion of the Sport
- 25 - Stadium
- 26 - Cinema
- 27 - The Galeria Palace
- 28 - Historical archive
- 29 - Ribeira Market
- 30 - Municipal Swimming pool



Please refer to section 3.16 for descriptions of the following:

Nightlife

- A. Ref' Café
- B. Patricks Bar
- C. Arco Bar
- D. Bar O Talabriga
- E. Bubibar
- F. The Docas Bars
- G. Ubi Discotheque

Shopping for food

- 1. LIDL
- 2. Pingo Doce Supermarket
- 3. Mercado Municipal

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Castelo ② Igreja de Santa Maria do Castelo ③ Igreja da Misericórdia ④ Igreja de Sant'iago ⑤ Igreja de São Paulo ⑥ Igreja do Carmo ⑦ Igreja de São José do Hospital ⑧ Igreja de São Francisco ⑨ Igreja de Santo António ⑩ Capela de São Sebastião | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑪ Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Consolação ⑫ Capela de Santa Ana ⑬ Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Livramento ⑭ Ermida de São Pedro Gonçalves Telmo (ou das Ondas) ⑮ Lagar-Museu (Casa das Artes) ⑯ Forte do Rato | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D Guarda Nacional Republicana E Polícia de Segurança Pública F Bombeiros Municipais G Cruz Vermelha H Quartel Militar I Rádio Gilão J Reparação de Finanças K Lota L Cais de Pesca M Novo Porto de Pesca | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N Terminal Rodoviário O Estação Ferroviária P Correios Q Telecom R Tribunal S Jardins T Parque Desportivo U Complexo Desportivo Municipal i Posto de Turismo |
|---|--|---|--|



3.6 **Getting Around (Bike Rental, Car Rental & Taxis)**

It takes about 25 minutes to walk from Vila Alecrim into the centre of Tavira.

Bike rental is offered by Lorisrent (tel 281 325 203, 964 079 233; Rua da Galeria 9A; open in the summer summer), Rent a Bike and Balsa (see section 3.11). Local car-rental agencies include Mudarent (tel 281 326 815; Rua da Silva 18D).

Taxis line up near the cinema on Rua Dr Marcelino Franco. I usually use taxis in the evening so that I can have a few drinks with my meal (wine is very cheap in Tavira). Taxis cost around 4 Euros to get from Vila Alecrim to the centre of Tavira. Taxis can get to the villa within 5 minutes and are very reliable. Some taxi companies are as follows (remember to put 00351 in front of number if using a British mobile):

- Orlandino: 917 882 752
- Vitor Guerreiro: 917 330 513 (Fax: 281 324 461, Email: taxigilao@sapo.pt for reservations)
- Rotaxi Tavira: 281 325 746, 289 895 793, 916 611 177
- Radio Taxis de Tavira: 281 32 15 44, 281 32 67 88, 917 220 456

3.7 **Important and Useful Telephone Numbers & Contact Details**

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Police | The police station (tel 281 322 022; Campo dos Martires da Patria) is at the southern edge of town. |
| Hospital | tel 281 324 023 |
| Emergency Treatment | For medical emergencies, go to the centro de saude (medical centre; tel 281 329 000; Rua Tenente Couto). A 24-hour private clinic, Clinica Medica (tel 281 321 750; Avenida Dr Teixeira de Azevedo 5), provides speedier (and pricier) treatment. |
| Ambulance | tel 281 325 473 |
| Fire Brigade | tel 281 322 122 |
| Town Hall | tel 281 320 500 |
| Tourist Office | The turismo (tel 281 322 511; Rua da Galeria; open 9.30am-1pm & 2pm-5.30pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr 9.30am-12.30pm & 2pm-6pm Fri-Mon, 9.30am-7pm Tues-Thur May-Sept) can provide local and regional information. The municipal website http://www.cni-tavira.pt is also useful. |
| SOS | 112 |
| Support to Tourists | tel 800 296 296 |
| Railways (CP) | tel 808 208 208, website http:// www.cp.pt |

3.8 **Money**

There are several banks with ATMs around Prafa da Repiublica and along Rua da Liberdade. There's also the private-exchange bureau Cota Cambios (Rua Estacio da Veiga 21; open 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat).

3.9 **Email & Internet Access**

Internet access is offered at Residential Bela Fria (see Places to Stay) for € per 15 minutes from 9am to 11 pm Monday to Saturday. PostNet (•a 281 320 910; Rua Dr Silvestre Falcao, Lote 6; open 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat) and Pastelaria Anazu (Rua Jaques Pessoa; open 8.30am-around midnight Mon-Sat) both charge €1.30 per 15 minutes.

Free Internet access is available in a building next to the city hall near to Praca da Republica at the corner where Rua da Liberdade and Rua Dr Jose Pires Padinha meet.

3.10 **Laundry**

There is a washing machine in Vila Alecrim, however should you want to go to a laundrette the Lavandaria Lavitt (tel 281 326 776; Rua das Salinas 6; open 9am-1pm & 3pm-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) charges €3 per 6kg (plus € for tumble-dry).

3.11 **Organised Tours**

Two-hour guided walking historical tours are offered twice daily in summer for around €2.50 per person. Call 281 321 946 for reservations and details.

Two bike rental places organise bike tours: Rent a Bike (Exploratio; tel/fax 281 321 973, tel 919 338 226; email exploratio@netc.pt and exploratio@hotmail.com; Rua do Forno 33) offers four-hour trips for €10 per person in and around Tavira and the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. With advance notice, Rent a Bike can also arrange half-day walking tours from €12.50 to €25 per person (depending on numbers). Balsa (tel 281 322 882; Rua Alvares Botelho 51) offers similar trips for €7.50.

Safari Boat (tel 933 683 237, 977 286 382; email safariboat@clix.pt; Cais da Santa Luzia) offers various summertime 'nature tours' from nearby Santa Luzia (4km west of Tavira), including a full-day outing for €15 per person.

Riosul (tel 281 510 201; Monte Gordo) has a pick-up point in Tavira for its jeep tours and Rio Guadiana cruises.

A toy train trundles from the main Rua da Liberdade up to the castle, along the riverfront and out to Quatro Aguas every hour or so between 10am-9.30pm (until midnight in July and Aug) for €2 per person.

3.12 **Special Events**

| | |
|---|--|
| June | Popular Saints Festivities |
| 24th - 25th June | Town Holiday - Tavira's biggest festival is the Festa de Cidade. Myrtle and paper flowers decorate streets throughout the entire town, free sardines are provided by the municipal authorities, and dancing and frolicking in the street continue until the wee hours. |
| August | Handicraft Festival |
| 1 st August | Feira de Boa Morte |
| 8 th to 11 th August | Feira de Santa Luzia |
| September | Feira Franca Anual (Santo Estavão) |
| September | Feira de Artesanato (Luz de Tavira) |
| September | Festa da N. Sra. da Saúde e São Luís (Santa Maria) |
| September | Festival de Folclore de Tavira |
| 4 th to 6 th October | Feira de São Francisco |
| 3 rd Monday of the month | Market Day |

3.13 **Good Food and Fine wine**

Fresh fish, grilled on an open fire, is an obvious choice in Tavira and the fishing villages of the coast. So are lobsters, shrimp, clams and other types of shell fish harvested from the sea or the Ria Formosa

Anyone who enjoys sampling regional cooking should try the tasty local cockle soup, sea food “acorda”, a kind of thick bread soup made with razor shells, cockles, prawns and clams; tuna in a tomato and onion sauce; bean stew with razor shells; and the distinctive clams with maize flour, known as “xerem”

Santa Luzia is renowned for its octopus risotto. Equally highly reputed is the mountain recipe for baked lamb, seasoned with fragrant bay leaves.

The range of sweets on offer is vast, from the Tavira “colchao”, which is flavoured with almonds, to “donsrodrigoes”, “carricos” and meringues, all baked to traditional recipes.

The red wines of Tavira taste of the hot sun that ripens the grapes and makes them rich in sugar.

The Algarve has long been an important wine-making area: the Mediterranean climate, rich soil and high-quality vines produce full-bodied wines with low acidity and a high alcohol content. The whites are traditionally very dry, the reds light and young. Although modern development has erased many vineyards, there are still about 40,000 acres of them in Lagoa area, producing the Algarve's best-known wines. Smaller wine-producing areas include Lagos, Tavira and Portimao.

3.14 Shopping for Food (refer to map 2 in section 3.5)

There are several mini supermarkets (Mini Mercado) dotted all over Tavira. There are 3 large supermarkets / markets in Tavira:

1. LIDL - Ideal for some cheaper goods and cheap booze.
2. Pingo Doce Supermarket - Everything you need under one roof.
3. Mercado Municipal - Huge modern market (most stalls are open only in the morning) and an excellent place to get fresh fruit & vegetables, fresh fish and fresh meat.

3.15 Places to Eat (refer to map 2 in section 3.5)

Tavira is generally endowed with restaurants, most of which serve very good food at moderate prices. Tuna is the local speciality. The area highlighted yellow on the map indicates where some of the best restaurants are located in Tavira centre.

3.15.1 Along the River (cross the Roman Bridge from the main square, turn left and go underneath the arch)

- Beira Rio - German run attractive riverside venue with tree shaded tables (second restaurant on the right along the river after you walk through the arch). Try the grilled tuna fish with onions.

3.15.2 Near the Triangle Square (cross the Roman Bridge, walk straight on along the road)

- Emigrante - Tasty and good value food. Most of the food is char-grilled on the large barbeque in the front of the restaurant. The place to go for chicken and chips.
- Porta da Econtra

3.15.3 North of Tavira (towards the Train Station)

- Avenidda - Local favourite with a generously long menu of both fish and meat dishes.
- Byblos Pizza

3.15.4 Quatro Aguas (Illa da Tavira Quay)

There are a couple of fine if expensive restaurants by the ferry terminal in Quatro Aguas. These restaurants are bit more stylish and more expensive than the restaurants in town. The more famous of the two is Restaurante Quatro Aguas (Tues-Sun noon-3pm & 7-10pm), which is a highly rated seafood restaurant specializing in dishes such as acorda and cataplana de marisco (seafood stews) and bife de frango com molho roquefort (chicken with roquefort sauce). Also serving good quality fish and seafood and slightly cheaper than Restaurante Quatro Aguas is Portas do Mar (Mon & Wed-Sun 12.30-3pm & 6.30-10.30pm), which has a little terrace facing the waters. Try its tasty shrimp curry.

3.15.5 Outside Tavira (near Pacapouco)

- Almargem de Santa Maria (tel: 281 32 33 86) - Definitely try the steak on the stone. On returning from their vacation all guests have agreed that it is without doubt the best steak they have ever tried. Advisable to pre-book as this restaurant gets extremely busy during the peak season.
- Nora Velha

3.15.6 Near Santo Estevao

- Mac's Bar (tel: 281 321 786) - Run by 2 friendly English ladies and full of British expats. Serves a very good Sunday Lunch. Turn right in Santo Estevao. Follow this road until you see a signpost for Prego. Follow the road towards Prego until you get to the T junction. Turn right and Mac's bar is immediately on the right.

3.16 Drinking & Nightlife (refer to map 2 in section 3.5)

Most bars are clustered along Rua Almirante Candido dos Reis and Rua Poeta Emiliano da Costa and are open until around 3am. A bottle of beer will generally cost around 1 Euro in these bars (Sagres, Crystal and Super Bock are the Portuguese home brands). Some bars that are worth a visit are:

3.16.1 Tavira Town (cheaper locations to drink)

- Ref' Café - Jazzy bar serving potent cocktails and catchy sounds to a largely local clientele.
- Patricks Bar - Welcoming adegas-style English run bar / restaurant.
- Arco Bar - Has a laid back atmosphere and multicultural clientele.
- Bar O Talabriga - Portuguese run bar.

3.16.2 On the eastern outskirts of Tavira (drinks are more expensive in these bars)

- Bubibar - Situated next to the Ubi Discotheque. This is the largest bar in Tavira and can get very busy during the weekends.
- The Docas Bars - Adjacent set of about 10 bars open until 6am in the morning.
- Ubi - Tavira's only disco is housed in a huge metallic warehouse and plays a mix of house, Latin and techno grooves until 5am. The locals warm up with a few pre-clubbing drinks in the Bubibar in the same building.

3.17 Cheap Tobacco and Cigarettes

There is tobacconist (who sells practically all brands) opposite the taxi rank on Rua Dr Marcelino Franco. A pack of cigarettes will cost between €2 to €2.75 depending on which brand you buy.

3.18 Parking in Tavira (refer to map 2 in section 3.5)

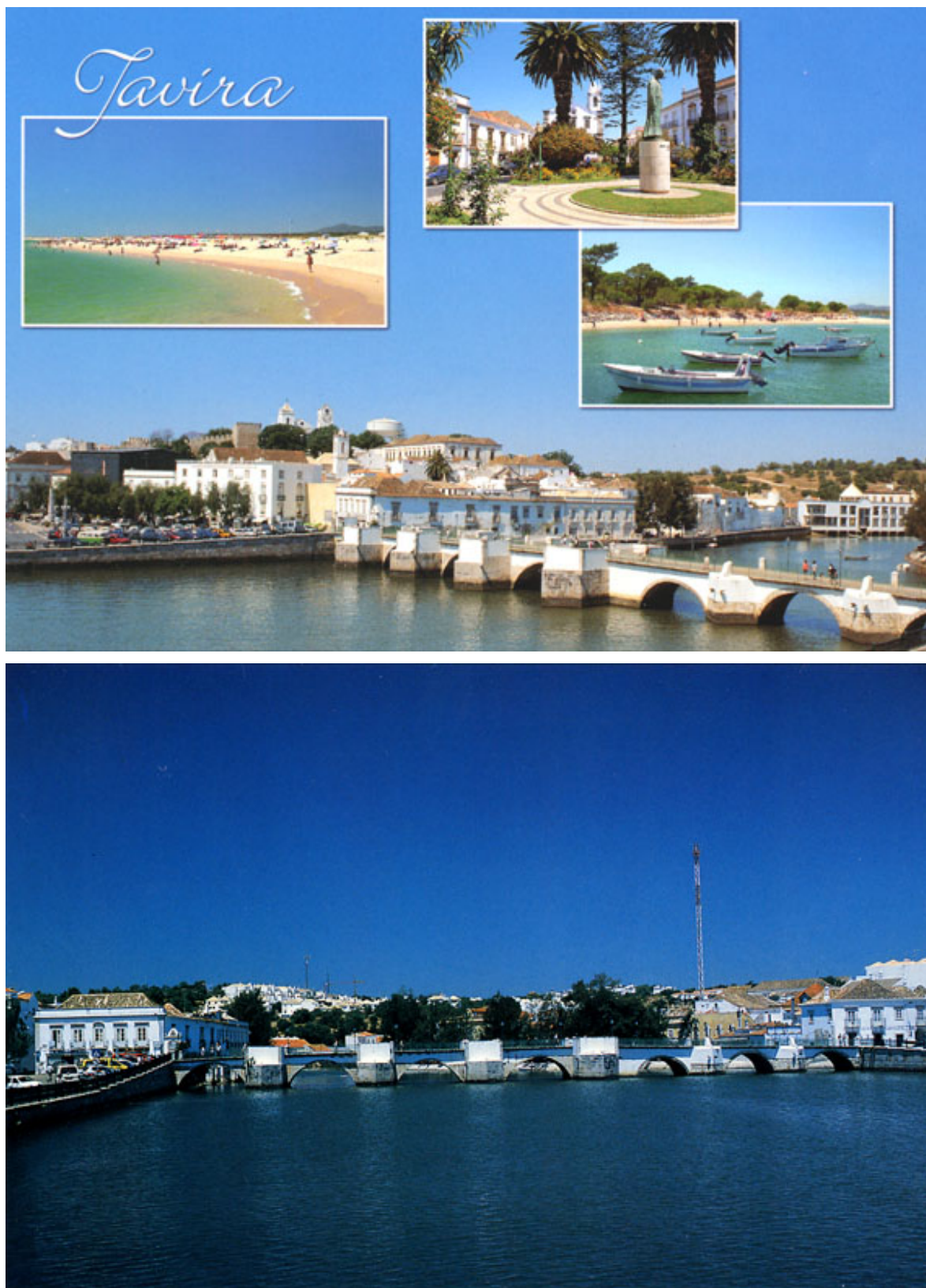
There are several small car parks in Tavira, all of which get very busy during the peak season. There is a large car park in the area shaded green on map 2 in section 3.5. I usually park underneath the flyover next to the Mercado Municipal as it is free to park here (please note: it was free to park underneath the flyover at the print date of this document, however this may change in the future).

3.19 Tavira Attractions & Site Seeing

The castle and the bell-towers of a multitude of churches. The river like a mirror reflecting houses and gardens. The distinctive outline of roofs in the local "tesouro" (treasure) style. Broad vistas of sea and sand. These are among the charms of Tavira, a city of art and history and an essential port of call on any cultural tour of the Algarve.

3.19.1 Ponte Romana (Roman Bridge)

This Roman bridge near the Praca da Republica owes its present design to a 17th-century restoration. The latest touch-up job was in 1989, after floods knocked down one of its pillars.



3.19.2 The Castle (Castelo)

Along with the ramparts that surrounded the city, sections of the walls of which still stand between the houses, and the Porta da Misericórdia (Gate of Mercy), and the castle was part of the city's defensive system. The old Moorish fortification was rebuilt by King Dinis (1261-1325).

From the top of its towers there is a panoramic view over Tavira, the surrounding countryside and the sea.

3.19.3 Along the Riverfront





With its tranquil vistas and leafy, palm-lined gardens, the riverfront is the best part of Tavira for a wander. Gardens lined with cafes run from south of Praca da Repiublica as far as the old market (mercado velho) building, which has been converted into a "cultural and shopping centre" - actually a handful of small boutiques and appealing waterfront cafes. The old market walls are also used for temporary exhibitions, usually the works of local artists and photographers.

Beyond the market, fishing boats dock as far as the new flyover; along this stretch of river lie restaurants or more basic fishermen's bars, most of which serve up decent meals, generally involving big tuna steaks. Just before the flyover, ferries depart for the beach in high season. Head under the bridge and you'll see the large new town market (Mon-Sat 8am-1.30pm), housed in a dull concrete box but still retaining a bustling interior filled with an array of vegetables and sea creatures of all shapes and sizes (see section 3.14).

3.19.4 Church of Santa Maria do Castelo (Saint Mary of the Castle)

Probably built on the site of the old mosque, the church dates from the 13th century. It has undergone alterations subsequently, some of them as a consequence of the earthquake of 1755.

It has a gothic porch, with capitals bearing vegetal ornamentation. Outside there are other gothic features to be seen: an ogival window, a small rose window and corbels and gargoyles on the head stone. The clocktower also dates from the original building though it displays subsequent decorative additions.

The interior consists of three vaulted naves. On the left-hand wall of the main chapel is the tomb of the seven Knights of the Order of Sant'lago (St. James) killed in a Moorish ambush, an episode which prompted the conquest of the city. On the pulpit there is a beautiful statue of the Nossa Senhora (Holy Lady) (18th century).

The walls of the Capela do Santissimo (Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament) are decorated with tiles depicting holy stories (18th century). The Capelas das Almas (Chapels of Souls) have carved retable, the central portion of which contains religious iconography depicted in high relief (early 18th century). The Capela do Senhor dos Passos (Chapel of the Lord of Passion) has tiled walls (17th century) and a carved retable (18th century).

In the sacristy there are 18th century tiles decorated with baskets of fruit and vases of flowers. Among the church treasures, which include objects wrought of precious metals from the 16th and 18th centuries and vestments, a

delightful missal lectern of Japanese origin (“nambam” art) dating from the 16th/ 17th centuries deserves a special mention.

3.19.4.1 A mysterious tomb

A Plaque in the main chapel indicates the site of the tomb of Paio Peres Correia, a valiant master of the Order of Sant’Iago (St. James) who played a decisive role in the Christian reconquest of the Algarve and part of the south of Spain.

Strangely enough, the Spanish monastery of Santa Maria de Tentudia (Saint Mary of Tentudia) also has a tomb which is said to be that of Paio Peres Correia. Nobody knows for sure where the old knight’s mortal remains are really to be found.

3.19.5 Church of Misericordia (Mercy)

This is deservedly regarded as the finest Renaissance (16th century) building in the Algarve.

It has a porch of great beauty crowned by a statue of Nossa Senhora da Misericordia (Our Lady of Mercy) under a canopy whose curtains are held back by two angels. On either side are the arms of Portugal and Tavira and two high reliefs depicting Sao Pedro (St. Peter) and Sao Paulo (St. Paul).

The interior is composed of three naves, with Renaissance-style capitals decorated with grotesques. In the main chapel there is a spectacularly carved and gilded retable and statues of Nossa Senhora da Visitacao (Our Lady of the Visitation) and Santa Isabel (St. Elizabeth) (18th century). In one of the side chapels there is a fine carved retable surrounding a circular painting of Nossa Senhora da Conceicao (Our Lady of the Conception) (18th century). The tiles on the walls date from the same period. They depict works of charity and have captions describing the scenes they illustrate

In the sacristy there is a statue of the Crucifixion which may date from the 16th century. There is a small cloister adjoining.

3.19.6 Church of Sant’Iago (St. James)

Erected, according to tradition on the site of the town’s lesser mosque. Began in the 17th century, it has undergone successive alterations.

Though architecturally modest, it is home to a valuable collection of statues and paintings, some of them from monasteries that have closed down. Among the statues, special mention is due to the Nossa Senhora da Conceicao (Our Lady of the Conception) (18th century) in the main chapel, the Nossa Senhora a Franca (Our Lady of the Candid) (possibly 16th century) and the Holy Family (18th century) in side chapels. In the sacristy there is an interesting statue of the Virgin (15th century) and others dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

3.19.7 Church of Sao Paulo (St. Paul)

Built at the beginning of the 17th century, it was a part of a former monastery. The façade has a porch. A statue of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda (Our Lady of the Help) (17th century) stands in a niche.

The interior consists of a single nave. The main altar has a carved retable (17th/ 18th centuries) with a statue of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda (Our Lady of the Help) (18th century).

The side alters of Nossa Senhora do Carmo (Our Lady of Carmel) and Nossa Senhora do Rosario (Our Lady of the Rosery) and the two side alters of Souls also have carved, unglilded retables dating from the 18th century. The retable of the Gospel is decorated with a polychrome low relief depicting the Last Supper (17th century).

The church houses a fine collection of 17th and 18th century statues, most notable among which is a Virgin of Flemish origin (15th century) in the transept.

The pavement of the transept is unique in Portugal: it is made up of small red bricks and lozenges painted with figures, of Spanish origin (17th century).

In the sacristy there are two 16th century panels showing the adoration of the Infant Jesus, and the statues from the 17th and 18th centuries.

3.19.8 Church of Carmo (Carmel)

Built in the second half of the 18th century. In the main chapel there is a large carved and gilded retable, which along with the side retables, paintings, statues, pew, organ and holy treasure constitutes a fine example of baroque art in the Algarve.

3.19.9 Church of Sao Jose do Hospital (St. Joseph of the Hospital)

The church was built to an octagonal plan at the end of the 18th century. It has a porch in the “rocaille” style and a main altar with “trompe l’oeil” painting. There are statues of Sao Vicente Ferrer (St. Vincent Ferrer), Nossa Senhora do Carmo (Our Lady of Carmel) and Santa Teresa (St. Theresa) which are good examples of 18th century sculpture. Adjoining the church is part of the Chapel of Sao Bras (Saint Bras) (15th century) with a ribbed vault and a delicate rose window.

3.19.10 Church of Sao Francisco (St. Francis)

Medieval in origin, this church, which was once part of a monastery, underwent a major transformation in the 19th century on account of collapse and fire. All that remains of the original gothic structure is the sacristy, with its broad window and vault, and two chapels in the old wall. It has a highly decorative baroque bell-tower (18th century).

In addition to a number of 18th century statues and four large canvasses by an Algarvean artist of the same period, the church is notable for a statue of Santa Ana (St. Anne) offering a piece of fruit to the Infant Jesus seated in the Virgin’s lap, which possibly dates from the 15th century. The carved and gilded baroque altar and the twelve niches in the Sanctuary- nowadays a side chapel – were part of the original church. In the Casa da Irmandade (House of the Brotherhood) – the old gatehouse to the monastery – there is an ashlar of patterned tiles (17th century).

3.19.11 Church of Santo Antonio (St. Anthony)

This belonged to small monastery of which the cloister still remains (17th century). Its most significant works of art are a series of almost life-size pictures depicting events from the life of the saint (17th century).

3.19.12 Chapel of Sao Sebastiao (St. Sebastian)

This structure is of architectural interest because of the shape of the main chapel-cubic, covered by a semi-spherical calotte, and the longer, lower body of the church (17th / 18th century).

The “trompe” l’oeil” paintings on the walls and the canvasses depicting scenes from the life of Jesus and Our Lady (18th century) have led this chapel being made into a Painting Museum.

Also of interest are the carvings and statuary, vestments and the holy treasure (18th century). In the sacristy there is a 17th century tiled ashlar.

3.19.13 Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Consolacao (Our Lady of the Consolation)

Polychrome tiles dating from the 17th century, a retable with paintings (16th / 17th centuries) in the main chapel and a harmonious statue of the patron saint make up the patrimony of this simple Chapel.

3.19.14 Chapel of Santa Ana (St. Anne)

Already in existence in the 16th century, this chapel was rebuilt in the 18th century. It boasts a fine collection of works of art, including carved alters, statues, a panel depicting Christ after the descent from the Cross (16th century) and a font supported by a twisted gothic column.

3.19.15 Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Livramento (Our Lady of the Liberation)

The façade is decorated with blue tiles from the 18th century. The interior contains a small treasure of baroque decoration (18th century) in the gilded carving of the main chapel, triumphal arch and side chapels. There are also a number of statues from the same period.

3.19.16 Chapel of Sao Pedro Goncalves Telmo (ou das Ondas) (St. Elmo or of the Waves)

This belonged to the Compromisso Maritimo (Maritime Agreement), a mutual association for sailors and fishermen. It probably has its origins in a 16th century building. It is built on a trapezoid plan and boasts a carved and gilded retable, paintings on the ceiling and altar panels and 18th century statues. The small, but elegant statue of Nossa Senhora das Ondas (Our Lady of the Waves) and the tiles on the main altar and in the sacristy date from the 17th century however. A side wall bears the arms of King Manuel, the Marquises of Vila Real and the Counts of Alcoutim (16th century).

3.19.17 Lagar Museu (Casa das Artes) (Olive Press Museum – House of the Arts)

This was formerly the home of the agricultural landowner, and its façade includes balconies facing the river. The Olive Press Museum offers the insight into the ancient techniques used to extract oil from the olives picked in the fields around Tavira. It includes an exhibition hall and an engraving workshop.

3.19.18 Forto do Rato

Built in the 16th Century at the mouth of the Gilao river, this fort defended the entrance to the harbour. It was redesigned during the War of the Restoration (1640-1668).

3.19.19 Chapel of Calvario (Calvary)

The rural origins of this building are apparent in its simple architecture, in the stonework highlighted with lines of colour, and in the bull's-eye window over the porch. The interior walls are painted with “trompe l’oeil” decoration; there is also a statue of the Crucifixion (18th century) and a tomb stone.

3.20 Around Tavira

South and east of Tavira lie the flat, open marshlands of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. Due south along the Rio Gilao valley it is a short ride - past the distinctive salt basins - to Quatro Aguas, where the river meets the sea. The shore here is sheltered by the offshore sandspit of Ilha de Tavira, with one of the best beaches in the Algarve - large enough to absorb the crowds even in high summer.

You can also reach the Ilha de Tavira from the holiday village of Pedras d'el Rei just east of Tavira. Here, a year-round toy train ferries passengers across the marshland to another part of the beach at Barril. On the way to Pedras d'el Rei, you'll pass the palm-lined riverfront of Santa Luzia, a charming fishing village with a row of neat fish restaurants.

Six kilometres east of Tavira - past the new golf course at Benamor (see section 4.1.1) - lies Cabanas, another erstwhile fishing village which is developing into a resort in its own right thanks to its excellent sandspit beach, the Praia de Cabanas. This spit can also be reached from Fabrica further east (see section 3.20.5), below Cacela Velha, (not to be confused with Vila Nova de Cacela, 2km inland), one of the prettiest villages in the Algarve and, for the time being at least, barely touched by tourism.

Beyond Cacela Velha, the sandspit starts to thin out, merging with the shoreline beach at Manta Rota, 12km away. Predictably Manta Rota and Altura have both been heavily developed, although the beaches at both the resorts are splendid, if rather crowded in summer; there are more alluring sandy stops at Praia Verde and Monte Gordo, the latter a lively resort and the last beach stop before the border.

3.20.1 Quatro Aguas and Ilha da Tavira (Isle of Tavira)



Quatro Aguas is little more than a huddle of cafes and restaurants next to the ferry terminal, though it's a pleasant place to stop for a coffee and admire the views. You'll want to spend most of your time, however, on the fantastic beaches on the Ilha de Tavira opposite. The island stretches southwest from Tavira almost as far as Fuzeta, some 14km away. For most of its length, the landward side of the island is a dank morass of mud flat, but at the eastern tip the mud gives way to an expanse of sand and sea. The beach is enormous, backed by tufted dunes, and its growing popularity has led to a certain amount of development. At the end of the main path, which runs from the jetty through a small chalet settlement, there are water sports facilities, beach umbrellas and loungers, and half a dozen bar-restaurants. Rather than spoiling things, however, this has fostered something of a good-time feel at the beach.

You can walk west up the beach for around 3km to the beachside cafe-restaurant at Barril. From here a toy train takes you back to the mainland at Pedras d'el Rei, where you can get a bus back to Tavira.

In July and August the crowds can get overwhelming around the cafes, but you can always walk west to escape the crowds. Here you'll find nudism pretty much the norm, though if you're around out of season you'll probably have the place entirely to yourself. Alternatively, pick up an attractive path heading west from the ferry stop, parallel to the coast alongside picnic tables dotted under fragrant pines.

3.20.1.1 Practicalities

From July to mid-September, ferries from Tavira to the island depart roughly hourly from the quayside near the flyover (daily 8am—7.30pm, last return 8pm; €1 return).

At other times of the year you have to pick up a ferry from Quatro Aguas, 2km east of town. Buses (July to mid-Sept Mon-Fri roughly hourly from 7.50am, last back 7.45pm) leave from the bus station in Tavira, for the ten-minute trip to the jetty at Quatro Aguas. You could also choose to walk the half-hour from town (along the river, past the old market, and just keep going), or get a taxi. The ferries from Quatro Aguas to the island (every 15min: June 8am-10pm; July & Aug 8am-midnight; April, May & Sept 8am-9pm; roughly hourly: Oct-March 9am-dusk; €0.75 return) take just five minutes - out of season, check with the ferryman what time the last boat returns.

There are half a dozen cafes and bars serving slightly pricey drinks and meals on the island itself, the best bet is the Sunshine Bar (daily; July-Sept 9am-1 1.30pm; April-June & Oct 9am-10am; rest of year in good weather only), an

Irish-Portuguese-run cafe serving tasty tuna steak, sardines, full breakfast plus vegetarian options. World music and jazzy sounds accompany the beach views.

3.20.2 Santa Luzia

West along the coastal road from Tavira is Santa Luzia, a small fishing village with a growing number of seafood restaurants catering to day-trippers attracted by its palm-lined waterfront, small but lively fishing harbour and a vast beach that offers hours of solitude, coupled with the pleasure of warm, clear waters. Having admired the octopus traps on the jetty and the bright whitewashed buildings, most people settle for a leisurely meal. In summer, however, (usually Tues and Thurs), it's worth enquiring at Safari Boats (tel 933 683 237, email safariboat@clix.pt), who run river trips up the Ria Formosa from just east of the fishing jetty. Most trips last for two or three hours and pass wading and seabirds with stop-offs for swimming at quiet beaches. Advance bookings are essential for the trips to Tavira, Ilha de Tavira, and sometimes up to Cacela Velha.

Ten weekday buses (three on Sat) make the 3km run from Tavira, some of the buses continuing on to Pedras d'el Rei (see section 3.20.3). The waterfront is the spot to head for restaurants; the best place for moderately priced seafood is Baixa Mar (Tues-Sat 12.15-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm, Sun 12.15-2.30pm), right opposite the jetty. Octopus is the local speciality, served with rice or as bicha de polvo e camarao na grelha (octopus and prawn kebab). Just east of Baixa Mar, with a spacious, azulejo-lined interior and an outdoor terrace, Marisqueira Capelo (Mon-Tues & Thurs-Sun noon-2am) is a tad more upmarket (and pricey), with a long menu of well-prepared fish and seafood.

3.20.3 Pedras d'el Rei and Praia de Barril

A further kilometre west from Santa Luzia, 4km west of Tavira lies Pedras d'el Rei, served by six buses daily from Tavira's bus station (Mon-Fri only). Most of Pedras d'El Rei consists of a fairly upmarket holiday complex, but it also offers access to another stretch of the Ilha da Tavira at Barril.

From the bus stop next to Pedras d'el Rei, cross the causeway to the terminal of a rather ancient-looking black and red miniature train (daily, except in bad weather, 8am dusk, roughly every 30min; €0.80 single). This shuttles across the mud flats - sending thousands of fiddler crabs scuttling about - to the beach of Barril on the Ilha de Tavira. A few minutes walk right or left of the terminus and there are miles of beautiful, peaceful, dune-fringed beach. Take your own food and drink, though, since the relative isolation means high prices in the couple of cafe-bars around the train stop. Barril is long enough to encompass both a cosmopolitan atmosphere and near complete isolation. Buildings that were once part of a tuna factory and have now been adapted for tourism recall the days when fishermen sailed in small boats to wrest their catch from the sea.

3.20.4 Cabanas

Separated by an arm of the Ria Formosa, Cabanas is a long line of fairly nondescript, low-rise shops, cafes and bars facing the river estuary. It can be reached by boat from Tavira. On the sand bank stands the fort of Sao Joao da Barra, at the entrance to the harbour, built to a polygonal design in the 17th / 18th centuries. Moored fishing boats testify to the village's former mainstay, though nowadays the economy is largely driven by tourism thanks to the glorious sands on Praia de Cabanas over the estuary, and a series of hotel complexes are scattered around the outskirts of the town.

3.20.4.1 Practicalities

Eight weekday buses (2 on Sat) run from Tavira to Cabanas (which is just 1km south of Conceifao on the Tavira to Vila Real railway line), pulling up at the west end of the waterfront. There is no tourist office in Cabanas but you can access the internet at @Benson's on Rua Jornal Povo Algarvia 16b, one block back from the front (Mon, Tues & Thurs-Sat 10am-2pm & 5-8pm).

To reach the beach, there are two ferry services, one from the east of town, the other from the west. Ten minutes walk east of the bus stop, ferries shuttle passengers to the beach every fifteen minutes or so (May-Sept only; € return). Five minutes walk west of the main riverfront, an all-year ferry service is also operated by the Golden Club resort (May-Sept daily every 15min; Oct-April 4 daily; €0.80 return).

3.20.4.2 Eating & Drinking

Cabanas has a high number of cafes, bars and restaurants spreading along the riverfront and a block or two inland. A good bet opposite the main bus stop, is Cobacabana (April-Oct daily noon-11pm), a smart place on two floors with a sprawling menu featuring pizzas, burgers and average-priced Portuguese staples. The upper floor has fine views over the water. Right opposite is Quasimodo (daily 8pm-2am), a low-ceilinged bar specializing in loud music and cocktails, with "no coffee" as a warning sign. A little further east, by the eastern ferry stop at Avenida 28 de Maio, is the Restaurante A Rocha (April-Oct daily 12.30-3pm & 7-10pm), an attractive place with a breezy terrace where you can enjoy mid-priced omelettes, salads and fresh fish.

3.20.5 Cacela Velha

Ten kilometres east from Tavira, Cacela Velha is a tiny whitewashed village perched on a rocky bluff overlooking the sea. Surrounded by olive groves, and home to an old church and the remains of an eighteenth-century fort, it is spectacularly pretty - a reminder of how the Algarve must have looked half a century ago. Get there while you can, as the idyllic nature of the village looks set to change with the planned construction of two golf courses, a luxury hotel and a tourist complex on the green fields immediately to the east. To get here, you need to get the Tavira-Vila Real bus to set you down on the highway, just before Vila Nova de Cacela, from where it's a fifteen-minute walk down a signposted side road to the village.

Naturally enough, the hamlet is short on facilities, but it has a little restaurant and a couple of cafes. The beach below the village, a continuation of Praia de Cabanas, is a delight. To get to it, follow signs to Fabrica, just west of the village, around a kilometre downhill. Here a ferry man can take you over to the beach for around €1 return; daily in summer but only during good weather the rest of the year. Fabrica also has a couple of good restaurants, best of which is O Costa (May-Sept daily noon-3pm & 7-11pm), serving moderately priced fish and grilled meats on a broad terrace facing the waters.

3.20.6 Manta Rota

Manta Rota, 2km further east from Cacela Velha along the coast, is the first place east of Tavira where the beach is accessible by land. And it's a superb, wide stretch of beach too, though the village that backs it is a characterless splodge of villas and modern apartments. Eating options are more encouraging: Praia Mar (daily: May-Sept 9am-9pm; Oct-April 9am-5pm) is the best-positioned beachside cafe, with a large outdoor terrace, decent bar snacks and drinks. For a full meal, Restaurante Restitiga (April-Oct daily noon-10pm), is a better bet for Portuguese staples, well prepared and decently priced, in an attractive building just back from the beach with an outdoor terrace.

There are no direct buses to Manta Rota from Tavira; the only services are from Vila Real (or Monte Gordo). Alternatively, ask to be let off any bus from Tavira to Vila Real at the Manta Rota turning on the highway, and walk the 2km down the side road.

From Manta Rota you can walk along the beach all the way to the eastern edge of Portugal: to walk from Manta Rota it's around thirty minutes to Alagoas, another twenty minutes to Praia Verde, and forty more on to Monte Gordo.

3.20.7 **Altura and Praia De Alagoas**

Three kilometres or so east of Manta Rota, Altura is a large modern resort spreading inland from another fine beach, Praia de Alagoas. Here, there's a line of beach umbrellas, bars and water sports on hand, along with the high-rise Eurotel Altura hotel, a towering three-star which dominates the beachfront.

If you're in the mood for a splurge, try the Bate qua eu Abre in Urbanizacao Rota do Sul (tel 281 956 656; Mon, Tues & Thurs-Sun 12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm), a highly rated if pricey restaurant tucked away in a residential part of Altura. Dishes include meat fondue, feijoada and bacalhau. There is no shortage of less expensive restaurants and cafes around the seafront. The best-positioned of these is Restaurante des Mares (May-Sept Mon & Wed-Sun 10am-3pm & 7-11pm; Oct-April 10am-3pm), serving moderately priced seafood, salads and omelettes right on the sands.

3.20.8 **Praia Verde**

It's another 4km along the main road from Altura to the point on the hillside directly above the sands at Praia Verde. Despite the densely packed cubes that make up the Real Village holiday complex on the wooded hill above, this remains the least-developed beach along this stretch, with just a couple of seasonal beach cafes and one restaurant, Pezinhos (Feb-Nov daily 10am-2am), selling slightly overpriced snacks and grills in a superb position right on the unspoilt sands.

The walk to or from Praia Verde's car park, at the top of the hill, will reward you with a splendid panoramic view from the lookout at the top. Further east, towards Monte Gordo, the beach becomes more unkempt, backed by scrubby dunes, but the sands are much less likely to be crowded in summer.

There are no buses to Praia Verde; if you're relying on public transport catch any bus going to Vila Real and get off on the highway and walk down the side road.

3.20.9 **Monte Gordo**

Monte Gordo is the last resort before the Spanish border and the most built-up of the eastern holiday towns. It is unashamedly high-rise, with new buildings still shooting up from the ground either side of the seafront casino. But though its name - which means "fat mountain" - is appropriately ungainly, the high-rises are relatively set back from the beach and the seafront road is partly pedestrianized. The beach, popular with Spanish day-trippers, is wonderfully broad, scattered with a cafe-restaurants offering studiously similar menus and inflated prices. There are also water sports and hot and cold showers.

Walkers can head east up the beach to the mouth of the Rio Guadiana, from where you can stand at the most southwesterly point of Portugal and peer over the border into Spain.

3.20.9.1 **Practicalities**

Buses from Vila Real and Tavira pull up on Rua Pedro Alvares Cabral, by the parish church. From here it is a short walk down the main Avenida Vasco de Gama to the seafront and the casino. Just east of the casino is the turismo (May-Sept Mon-Fri 9.30am-7pm; Oct-April 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm; tel 281 544 495), which can hand out town maps. Monte Gordo is the site of the last and largest campsite on this stretch, a huge place set under pines out on the Vila Real road, a short walk from the beach.

3.20.9.2 **Eating & Drinking**

Restaurante O Firmo (Daily noon-9pm) provides moderate priced food on the beach in front of the casino, this laid-back restaurant offers slightly pricey grills and salads, but its terrace can't be faulted. Restaurante do Jaime (Daily 9am-7pm) is a simple inexpensive beach cafe-restaurant facing the jumble of fishing boats west of the casino. The Portuguese food is nothing special but the prices are good. Restaurante Mota (Daily 10am-10pm.) is moderately priced, set just east of the casino right on the sands, this is the best place to eat on the front, a big place specializing in cataplanas, arroz dishes, feijoada and seafood.

3.20.10 **Luz De Tavira**

The houses in Luz de Tavira have the traditional "platibandas" – borders painted with geometrical or floral motifs that frame walls, windows and doorways – many of which are masterpieces of mortar work. The influence of the Art

Nouveau decorative style, popular at the beginning of the century, is apparent in the ornate chimneys rising from the roofs.

3.20.10.1 Main Church

Built in the 16th century, much of the original structure has survived to the present day. The imposing Renaissance porch takes up a large part of the main façade. The roofs of the three naves are hidden by an original and highly decorative ensemble made up of one semi-circular and two triangular pediments. A statue of Nossa Senhora da Luz (Our Lady of the Light) stands in a niche

There is a very ornate side porch in the Manueline style, with columns carved in the shape of twisted ropes, a typically nautical motif. On the walls of the church there are four stone rosettes, interpreted as symbols of the sun, moon and stars.

The three naves of the interior are spanned by painted vaults. In the main chapel there is a Renaissance retable that is contemporary with the church itself, although the paintings date from the 17th century. The steps and pavement are decorated with 16th century tiles from Seville. Among the statues to be seen, some of which date from the 17th and 18th centuries, pride of place goes to that of the church's patron saint (16th century), which is kept in the sacristy.

A short way away stands the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Livramento (Our Lady of the Liberation) (18th century), the exterior of which is plain and slightly bizarre. Its alter is in the baroque style and is fashioned wholly out of marble of various colours quarried in the Algarve.

3.20.10.2 The Roman town of Balsa

As its name suggests, Balsa may originally have been a native settlement. From the time of Julius Caesar or Augustus onward (1st century B.C.) it was an important Roman town. In the 2nd century it was elevated to the status of a "municipium", a move which promoted a programme of public works, including the construction, among other buildings of a circus.

Balsa was definitely inhabited until the 6th century but was abandoned at some as yet undetermined later stage. The local economy, like that of other Roman cities on the Algarve coast was based on fishing and fish salting as well as trade. Located on the Quinta de Torre de Ares and Quinta das Antas farms (near to Pedras d'El Rei), opposite the Ria Formosa and the sea, the town of Balsa was the site of archaeological digs at the end of the 19th century which in the 20th yielded a valuable hoard of artefacts now kept in the National Archaeological Museum, in Lisbon. Balsa thus remains a treasure trove of art and history waiting to be uncovered

3.20.11 Estiramantens

This is a typical Algarvean village, notable for its attractive chimneys

3.20.11.1 Monte da Guerreira Museum(Zezinho de Beja)

Housed in a typical Algarvean farmhouse, this museum contains an exhibition of religious art and decorative arts from the 17th and 18th centuries, including statues, china, glass, silver, and furniture.

3.20.12 Conceicao de Tavira

This town of farmers and fishermen has old houses tucked away down narrow streets and open views of sea and shore.

3.20.12.1 Main Church

The church's gothic origins are evident from the fine main porch, which boasts five reentrant columns. It has suffered a number of modifications since it was first built.

The main chapel has a gothic vault and a triumphal arch in the Renaissance style (16th century). There are statues from the 17th and 18th centuries. Among the items in the church's holy treasure is a 17th century silver monstrance.

3.20.13 Santa Catarina da Fonte do Bispo

Surrounded by groves of flourishing almond and orange trees, this is a town typical of the limestone lands of the Algarve's intermediate rural area, known as the "Barrocal".

3.20.13.1 Main Church

The church is in the Renaissance style (16th century) and has a decorated porch. The interior is made up of three naves and has columns with Ionic capitals.

The main chapel is spanned by a painted vault and has, to one side, a Manueline doorway (16th century). Among the statues to be seen, there is a 16th century Nossa Senhora da Graça (Our Lady of the Grace) which is particularly deserving of mention. The Adoration of the Shepherds is depicted on a panel.

3.20.14 Conceicao

Opposite the village of the same name. Reached by boat. Extensive beach. Very calm.

3.20.15 From the Beaches to the Hills

The blue of the sea gives way to the pale gold of sand, the calm waters of the Ria Formosa, the lush green of flat fields where the old scoop wheels that used to draw water up from the depths of the wells are still to be seen.

In the background loom the rounded forms of the hill ranges of the interior. Between them and the coastal plain are gentle slopes covered with fig, almond, olive and carob trees, typical of the limestone soils of the "Barrocal".

Before heading into the "Barrocal" and on towards the hilltops in the far distance, it is worth visiting the Torre de Ares to take in the panoramic views afforded by this former coastal watchtower. Take the time to walk around the triangle marked out by the shore and the pretty village of Santo Estevao, with its white houses, interesting chimneys, bell-tower and church, the last of which is home to a number of 17th and 18th century statues. All around, refreshed by the water, are fields of orange, loquat and other fruit trees, flourishing vegetable gardens and bright flowers. It is a place for quiet walks through an idyllic landscape, an opportunity to savour a few moments of tranquillity.

Further north, the land is given over to crops that can resist drier conditions. Birds sing among the branches of the trees. There are alluring spots along the banks of the Asseca creek, as well as a small waterfall at Moinhos da Rocha. The soils here are deep red, and the underlying limestone breaks the surface in places like a giant's bones. This is the "Barrocal", a transitional Algarve linking the sea with the hills. It is home to the dwarf palm, which grows wild on its slopes and has been used for thousands of years to make useful implements ranging from brooms to baskets.

Now the traveller reaches the hills. These are at their most beautiful, their most authentic, when seen on foot or from the unmetalled tracks that link tiny hamlets of no more than a dozen or so houses with evocative names like Casa Queimada, Ribeira das Umbrias and Catraia.

Cachopo, a large village in the hills, stands on the peak of a hill, proud of its whitewashed church, perched at the top of a flight of steps, and of its past. In days gone by it was a resort popular with visitors who came for its healthy airs and for the curative powers of the iron-rich waters that bubble from a nearby spring. Nearby, in the village of Mealha, stands the Pedras Altas (High Stones) dolmen and, a little further on, in Alcarias Pedro Guerreiro, are the dolmens of Masmora and Castelhana.

3.20.16 Parque Natural da Ria Formosa

The Ria Formosa Natural Park is primarily a lagoon system stretching for 60km along the Algarve coastline from just west of Faro to Cacela Velha. It encloses a vast area of marsh (sapal), salt pans (salinas), creeks and dune islands. Near the western boundary of the park there are also two freshwater lakes, at Ludo and Quinta do Lago, which constitute a vital habitat for migrating and nesting birds. A huge variety of wetland birds can be seen in the park, as well as ducks, shorebirds, gulls and terns. This is the favoured nesting place of the little tern and rare purple gallinule (see section 3.24).

You'll also find some of the Algarve's quietest, biggest beaches on the sandbank Unas of Faro, Culatra, Armona and Tavira.

The park headquarters (tel 289 704 134, fax 289 704 165, email pnrf@icn.pt, Quinta de Marim) is 3km east of Olhao and has an excellent visitor centre (open 9am-5.30pm daily). Try the 2.4km nature trail across the dunes (admission €1.50).

To get to Quinta de Marim take any Tavira-bound bus from Olhao, get off at the Cepsa petrol station, and walk seaward for 1km (the visitor centre is 200m beyond Camping Olhao). Alternatively, a bus goes to the camp site every hour or two on weekdays and Saturday morning, from beside Jardim Patrao Joaquim Lopes in Olhao.

3.20.17 Reserva Natural do Sapal de Castro Marim e Vila Real de Santo Antonio

Established in 1975, this nature reserve is the oldest in Portugal, covering some 20 sq km of marsh-land and commercial salt pans bordering the Rio Guadiana north of Vila Real. Among its most important winter visitors are greater flamingos, spoonbills, avocets and Caspian terns. In spring you can see dozens of white storks.

The park's administrative office (tel 281 510 680, fax 281 531 257; Sapal de Venta Moinhos; open 9am-12.30pm & 2pm-5.30pm Mon-Fri) is 2km from Monte Francisco (a five-minute bus ride north of Castro Marim); get directions from the turismo at Castro Marim as there are no signs. Another rewarding area for spotting the park's birdlife is around Cerro do Bufo, 2km southwest of Castro Marim. Staff at the park office and at Castro Marim's turismo can provide details.

3.20.18 Along the Guadiana and into the Serra de Alcaria

The broad Rio Guadiana marks the Algarve's eastern border with Spain. Until the 1990s, the main route from the Algarve into Spain was via Vila Real, a historic border town which marks the end of the trans-Algarve railway line. Then, all train, car or bus passengers had to hop onto a ferry to Ayamonte over the river for onward connections. The ferry remains the most fun way of visiting Spain, but nowadays a modern road bridge to the north whisks cars and buses straight over the permanently open border.

North of Vila Real, Castro Marim's historical role as a frontier town is still evident in its two spectacular forts, while further border fortifications are also evident at the picturesque town of Alcoutim, 40km to the north. The minor road hugging the river valley in between these two towns is a delight, while spectacular mountain scenery can be enjoyed inland from Alcoutim across the wild Serra de Alcaria, where virtually the only form of development is near Vaqueiros, with a brand new golf course and a mining village theme park, A Corvo dos Mouros.

3.21 Traditional Crafts

The persistence of techniques handed down from generation to generation is a sign of the vitality of popular culture. The saddlemakers of Tavira and Cachopo still twist brightly coloured woollen threads into decorative flourishes worn by the mules used in the hills to till the fields and pull painted carts. The women of Cachopo dye wool and cotton threads with dyes extracted from plants and weave into colourful blankets on wooden looms.

Cachopo also produces knitted garments decorated with embroidery inspired by the wild flowers found in the fields.

In Tavira there are blacksmiths who produce artful wrought ironwork and there is a strong tradition of lace-making among the female population. Conceicao is home to potters, who make "covos" – earthenware traps used in fishing – and other useful vessels as well as producing hand-made ceramic tiles.

3.22 Tuna Fishing

Tuna (atum) was once the mainstay of the local fishing community and continues to be the speciality in many of Tavira's fish restaurants. The Moors were the first to take advantage of the large numbers of tuna, developing specially adapted fishing boats which used a combined netting system known as an armacao (giving the name to the town of Armagao de Pera), which continued to be used until recently. During the nineteenth century, around forty of these boats would set off in a special formation designed to guide the giant fish - which can be up to three metres long - into the centre of the nets where they were harpooned by the fishermen. The best ever catch was in 1881, when 42,000 tuna were caught off the coast here. Nowadays, modern fishing techniques and dwindling tuna stocks have seen the town's importance as a tuna fishing centre decline and most fish is caught from Olhao, Portimao and Vila Real, which help supply some twenty percent of Portugal's total catch. With their more plentiful supply, sardines have overtaken tuna as the most important fish off the Algarve's coast.

3.23 ***Salt of the South***

Between Tavira and the Ilha de Tavira you will see large, rectangular basins cut into the marshy soil. These are salinas, salt extraction plants, which cover nearly one hundred square kilometres of land around Tavira and Ludo, Olhao and Fuzeta and supply Portugal with fifty percent of its salt. The system used today is similar to that used in Roman times, with the sun and the tides the only forms of energy required to transform brackish water into high-quality salt. The basins are designed so that salt water flows from one to another, with evaporation increasing the salinity of the water until the last basin, where the salt crystallizes at the bottom. Despite the industrial look of the rod-straight basins, their shallow waters act as a useful source of food for migrating birds. In some places, the salinas have been converted into fish farms used to breed gilthead, bass, sole, seabream, eel and cockles.

3.24 ***Gallinules***

The purple gallinule (also known as the purple swamp-hen or, far more exotically, as the sultan chicken) is one of Europe's most rare and elusive birds. It's an extraordinary violet-blue water bird the size of a large domestic fowl and has a massive red bill and red legs. In Portugal, its only confirmed nesting place is in an isolated fragment of wetland, which is partly in the grounds of the exclusive Quinta do Lago villa estate, at the western end of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, about 12km west of Faro.

Not so long ago, the bird was facing local extinction with just two pairs recorded. But when the estate built a freshwater lake to help irrigate its new Sao Lourenco golf course, the gallinule's fortunes dramatically improved. The normally shy birds - now numbering about 60 - often strut around the fairways before the first golfers arrive.

You can get a good look at the sultan from an elevated public hide overlooking the lake, about 1km along the estate's Sao Lourenco Nature Trail. To reach the start of the trail, at a wooden bridge crossing the lagoon, head for roundabout 6 from the estate's entrance.

3.25 ***Now You See Me, Now You Don't ...***

The Mediterranean chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) is a bizarre 25cm-long reptile with independently moving eyes, a tongue that's longer than its body and a skin that changes colour according to its environment (from bright yellow to jet black). It only started creeping around southern Portugal about 75 years ago, probably introduced from North Africa. Strictly protected, it is the only type of chameleon found in Europe, with a habitat limited to Crete and the Iberian Peninsula. Its only home in Portugal is in the leeward Algarve, where it hides out in pine groves and coastal shrublands. Your best chance of seeing this shy creature is in the Quinta de Marim area of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa or in Monte Gordo's conifer woods, now a protected habitat for the species. Hibernating from December to March (the only other time it comes down to ground level is in October to lay its eggs), the chameleon is most commonly seen on spring mornings, slowly clambering along branches.

3.26 ***Where Eagle Owls Fly***

In the foothills of the Serra do Caldeirao, 21km northwest of Loule, is the Rocha da Pena, a 479m-high limestone outcrop marked as a classified site because of its rich flora and fauna. Orchids, narcissi and native cistus cover the slopes, where red foxes and Egyptian mongooses are common. Among many bird species seen here are the huge eagle owl, Bonelli's eagle and the buzzard.

A centro ambiental (environmental centre) has been established in the village of Pena, and there's a 4.7km circular walking trail starting from Rocha, 1 km from Pena.

3.27 ***Almond Blossom***

The blossoming of the almond trees in late January and February have become one of Portugal's most famous sights. The blossom is known as the Snow of the Algarve after the legend of a Moorish king, who fell in love with and married a Swedish girl. But the girl grew gradually more depressed with the passing of each snow-free winter in the sunny Algarve. The king duly imported hundreds of almond trees and planted them round the land. The following winter, the king proudly pointed to the white almond blossom, declaring "Look, the snow of the Algarve", and they lived happily ever after. Today the almond tree continues to supply many of the Algarve's delicacies, including salted almonds and marzipan.

3.28 *More Pictures of Tavira Municipality*







3.29 **Summary**

A trip to the main town of Tavira, a historic tuna fishing port, is a must. Tavira is one of the Algarve's oldest and most beautiful towns. It's a quirky gem with a hilltop castle, 39 surviving churches and chapels, jumbly houses, towers, medieval battlements and famous roman bridge. Elegant cafes spill out onto streets lined with feathery pepper trees and its restaurants serve the best seafood on the coast. There are plenty of cosy restaurants to relax and enjoy the wonderful selection of fresh seafood accompanied by the famous Portuguese wines.

4. Sports & Activities

With its superb range of sports facilities, from some of the world's greatest golf courses to year-round tennis and leisure centres, it is not surprising that parts of the Algarve are known as Sportugal. Participatory sports on offer in Portugal include windsurfing, surfing, golf, horse riding and tennis, all of which can be enjoyed pretty much year round.

4.1 *Playing Golf*

Why not make the most of your villa holiday and spend a few days working on your golf swing. There are many excellent courses available in the Algarve. Vila Alecrim is set near 3 of the newest Eastern Algarve golf courses, Benamor (5km from villa), Quinta da Ria (12km from villa) and Quinta de Cima (12km from villa). This allows maximum time on the green, be it a full round, a club competition, or just making profitable use of the extensive practice facilities. It's amazing what the Mediterranean sun on your back can do to your game, and whatever your handicap you'll be inspired by the courses. For more information, see <http://www.algarvegolf.net> and <http://www.portugalgolf.pt>.

4.1.1 **Benamor**

This course is endorsing its growing reputation for its player enjoyment and with the recent improvement of the access from the "Via de Infante" to Tavira this makes the whole area much quicker to reach. The course is laid out on mainly undulating land. The course offers pleasant views both to the Atlantic Ocean and the hills of the Serra do Caldeirão. Players accuracy is particularly called upon by the architects retention of as many of the old trees as feasible. These natural obstacles coupled with strategic placed bunkers and occasional water hazards make the course a worthwhile challenge.

For more information go to <http://www.algarvegolf.net/courses/benamor.htm>

4.1.2 **Quinta da Ria**

Course designed by Rocky Roquemore to take advantage of the beautiful natural setting in a Nature Reserve with the blue sea as its southern boundary. A 475 meter par-5 hole sets the tone of the course taking the player down a gentle slope to the first of the several undulating green. The par-3 fifth hole is a challenging dogleg to the left with a lake to catch the short ball. The back nine takes the player close to the beach and the panoramic sea views. The interesting par-4 fourteenth of 333 meters which is another dogleg to the left presents water to the right on the drive and then again inviting water to your left to carry on the approach shot to the green. The eighteenth par-5 of 475 meters has a generous width to the fairway but the green is almost surrounded by guarding bunkers.

For more information go to <http://www.algarvegolf.net/courses/quintadaria.htm>

4.1.3 **Quinta de Cima**

This new sister course to Quinta da Ria is of a Championship character which will provide an enjoyable challenge for most players. Set in rolling land dotted with almond trees it provides open fairways, well placed bunkers and enough water to attract the odd misdirected golf ball. The first two holes indicate the true nature of the course emphasizing the need for good club selection combined with accuracy. Players are already making their comments about the tricky Par-5 sixteenth hole and the memorable eighteenth.

For more information go to <http://www.algarvegolf.net/courses/quintadecima.htm>

4.2 *Jeep Tours*

Several companies run one-day jeep trips into the hills or along the west coast, notably Riosul (tel 281 510 200; Monte Gordo). One of the more environmentally conscious operators is Horizonte (tel/fax 282 695 920), which specialises in the Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina. Prices for one-day trips range from €36 to €41 per person and include lunch; there are various pick-up points (eg, Albufeira, Tavira and Monte Gordo for the Riosul safaris).

4.3 **Coach Tours**

Typical regional coach trips, operated largely by Faro-based Mega Tur (tel 289 807 648) include the inland 'Unspoilt Algarve'; Silves and the Serra de Monchique; Lagos and Sagres; the Saturday market at Loule; and the Wednesday market at Quarteira. Typical prices are around €18.50 for a half-day tour, and between €33 to €44 for a full day. Brochures are available at turismos and travel agencies.

Two big bus companies, Eva (tel 289 899 740) and Rede Expressos (tel 289 899 760), operate frequent services between the Algarve's major towns and elsewhere in Portugal (Eva's long-distance routes are marketed under the name Eva Mundial Turismo). Smaller lines include Caima, Renex and Frota Azul. If you plan to bus around the Algarve, consider buying the Passe Turistico (€15.50/21.50), good for three/seven days of unlimited travel on most main routes between Lagos and Loule. It's available from major bus stations.

4.4 **River and Coastal Trips**

You can cruise the Rio Arade between Portimao and Silves or the Rio Guadiana between Vila Real de Santo Antonio and Foz de Odeleite (see section 4.6).

Faro-based Animaris (tel 917 811 856) arranges trips through the Ria Formosa to Ilha Deserta.

See also Safari Boats in section 3.20.2.

4.5 **Walking**

The Algarve's spectacular coastal paths and unspoilt interior offer exceptional walking. Most of the walks are along farm tracks or coastal paths, and none of them are hazardous or unsuitable for inexperienced walkers. They can be tackled all year round, though you'll want to set off early in high summer to avoid the midday heat.

The tourist offices produce some walking leaflets, and can usually supply details of local organized tours. The Serra de Monchique is particularly popular.

The Os Caminheiros do Algarve/ Walkers (tel 289 360 270; email ebor@mail.telepac.pt) is an informal club that convenes every third Saturday of the month between September and May for a gentle trek, mainly in eastern Algarve. Visitors are welcome (€2.50 per person). The club also arranges Discovery trips to places further afield (around €25 per person, including lunch).

The environmental NGO Almargem (tel 289 412 959, almargem@mail.telepac.pt) is a Loule-based environmental group that welcomes visitors on its frequent walks of 10km or so. They produce a pack of walking leaflets, Salir, Perairsos Pedestres, available from its headquarters at Alto de Sao Domingo 14, Loule (€8), with information about half a dozen way-marked walks in the Salir area. They also produce less detailed, but free, walking leaflets covering a range of inland walks mostly in the central Algarve, available from Loule's tourist office or from the address above.

The Liga para a Protecao da Natureza (league for the Protection of Nature; tel 282 968380) also organises short walks to areas of natural interest on the first Saturday of the month (except January and August). For club meeting times, check listings in the Algarve Resident magazine.

Several guidebooks can help you on your way, including the locally published Algarve: Let's Walk by Julie Statham, describing 20 easy walks in the region, and two Discovery Walking Guides to areas around Loule and Silves, featuring 1:25,000 map sections. These latter titles can be ordered online at www.walking.demon.co.uk.

Julie Statham's Portugal Walks (tel 282 698 676) has a weekly programme of half-day guided walks in the Algarve for €12 per person.

4.51 **Via Algarviana**

Thanks largely to two walking clubs in the Algarve - Loule-based Almargem and Silves-based Os Caminheiros do Algarve/Walkers (OCDAAW) - a 243km trail has been pioneered right across the Algarve, from Alcoutim to Cabo de Sao Vicente. Tested by both walkers and horse riders, the Via Algarviana is now largely way marked.

By creating an 80km spur from Alcoutim to Val Verde del Camino in Spain and then to the Caminho do Portugal to Seville, the enthusiastic club members and their Spanish counterparts aim to link the Via Algarviana with the network of Europe-wide long-distance footpaths known as Euro Routes.

For more details, contact the two clubs directly or the Federacao Portuguesa de Campismo Caravanismo (tel 218 126 890; email info@fpcampismo.pt; Avenida Coronel Eduardo Galhardo 24D, 1100-007 Lisbon).

4.6 Cruising and Biking Along the Guadiana

A great way to see Portugal and Spain at the same time is on a boat up the Rio Guadiana (which serves as the border for some 50km) departing from Vila Real harbour. Some go as far as Alcoutim, around 40km away, others to Foz de Odeleite, around half that distance. Either trip is idyllic, passing through rolling countryside. The main operator is Riosul (tel 281 510 200; Monte Gordo), which runs trips from Vila Real de Santo Antonio to Foz de Odeleite at least four times weekly in summer and twice-weekly year-round. The trips cost €37.50/18 per adult/child, including lunch sometimes swimming stops.

Turismar (tel 281 513 504, 968 201 810) cruises further, to Alcoutim, three times weekly between April and October. Book a day ahead; tickets (€48/24 adult/child aged 3 to 10, including lunch) are available at its kiosk by the ferry pier in Vila Real de Santo Antonio. Tickets can be purchased at the Ayamonte ferry ticket office; Rio Sul, Rua Tristao Vaz Teixeira, Monte Gordo (tel 281 510 200); Transguadiana, Rua Diogo Cao, Monte Gordo (tel 281 512 997); or Mega Tur, Rua Conselheiro Bivar 80, Faro (tel 289 808 489).

The quiet back road that hugs the river for 14km from Foz de Odeleite to Alcoutim is also popular with bikers. Along this scenic route are several villages worth visiting, including Alamo, with its Roman dam, and Guerreiros do Rio, which has a small Museu do Rio (River Museum; tel 287 547 380; admission €1; open 9am-12.30pm & 1.30pm-5pm Tues-Sat), a one-room ethnological display (with English text available) of traditional river life.

You can rent bikes in Alcoutim or Monte Gordo, 26km from Foz de Odeleite. Contact the boat operators in advance if you want to take your bike on the boat.

4.8 Water Parks

There are also four huge water-slide parks along or near the N125:

- Slide & Splash, west of Lagoa (tel 282 341 685; adult/child 5-10 €12.50/10)
- The Big One, near Albufeira (tel 282 322 827; adult/child 5-10 €13/10.50)
- Atlantico Parque, between Almancil and Loule (tel 289 397 282; adult/child 5-10 €11/9)
- Aqua Show, in Vilamoura (tel 289 388 874; adult/child 5-10 €11/9)

4.9 Animal Parks

One of the biggest Algarve attractions is the Zoomarine (tel 289 560 300) aquatic park near Albufeira.

Krazy World (tel 282 574 134; open 10am-7.30pm daily June-Sept, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar), near Sao Bartolomeu de Messines, is an animal and crocodile park with minigolf and quad-bike courses.

4.10 Water Sports

Fancy going down-under? Head to Lagos, Sagres or Carvoeiro for some recommended scuba-diving centres. Water-skiing, windsurfing or bodyboarding can be easily arranged through resorts or with operators in Lagos or Sagres. Equipment and tuition for water sports, including wind surfing and water-skiing, is available on most of the Algarve beaches.

Scuba-diving can be rewarding in the clear, sheltered waters close to the coast. Diving sessions cost around €45 for three-hour equipment hire, or you can take four-day PADI open water diving courses from around €345; ask at the local tourist office in Tavira for details of diving companies.

As for surfing, you'll find some of the most wicked surfing spots in Portugal along the wild coast north of Sagres. The biggest surfing destination is the west coast of the region, especially Praia do Amado, where you can have lessons, though the winds and currents here require a high level of expertise. Jet skis are also for rent from the larger resorts; prices start from around €80 per hour.

Sailors can check out Dynamic Vela Sailing School in Praia da Rocha. Deep-sea fishing fans have plenty of options in Sagres, Lagos, Portimao and Praia da Rocha.

4.11 Tennis

There are numerous leisure centres and specialist tennis centres; some are listed below. All of these can hire out rackets and balls and the larger ones offer tennis coaching (in English) for all ages. Courts cost around €8-13 an hour and stay open year round. For further information contact the Portuguese National Tourist Office.

4.11.1 Tennis and leisure centres

- Barringtons - Vale do Lobo, tel 289 396 622, web <http://www.barringtons-pt.com>
- Burgau Sports Centre – Burgau, tel 282 697 350
- Luz Bay Club - Rua do Jardim, tel 282 789 640, fax 282 789 641
- Luz Ocean Club - Praia da Luz, tel 282 789 764, email ocean.club.luz@mail.telepac
- Jim Stewart Tennis Centre, Quinta do Lago, tel 289 398 848, fax 289 396 695
- Rock Garden Sports and Leisure Centre - Vilamoura, tel 289 322 740
- Vale do Lobo Tennis Centre - Vale do Lobo, tel 289 396 991, fax 289 396 926

4.12 Horse Riding

There are countless riding stables dotted round the Algarve, most of which offer one-hour or full-day rides into the surrounding countryside. Prices start from around €15-20 for an hour's trek, rising to around €80-100 for a full day's trek, which usually includes a picnic lunch. For details of centros hipicos (riding schools), contact the local tourist office in Tavira.

4.13 Spectator Sports

There are plenty of spectator sports, from the dubious pleasures of bullfighting to top Portuguese soccer to international golfing tournaments.

4.13.1 Bullfights

The Portuguese bullfight is neither as commonplace nor as famous as its Spanish counterpart, but as a spectacle it's marginally preferable. In Portugal the bull isn't killed in the ring, but wrestled to the ground in an elegant, colourful and skilled display. After the fight, however, the bull is always slaughtered.

A tourada opens with the bull, its horns padded or sheared flat, facing a mounted toureiro in elaborate eighteenth-century costume. His job is to provoke and exhaust the bull and to plant the dart-like farpas (or bandarilhas) in its back while avoiding the charge. Once the beast is tired the mocos-de-forcado (or forcados), move in, an eight-man team which tries to immobilize it. They line up behind each other across the ring from the bull and persuade it to charge them, the front man leaping between the horns while the rest grab hold and try to subdue it. It's as absurd as it is courageous, and often takes two or three attempts, often resulting with one or more of the forcados being tossed spectacularly into the air. The display ends when the bull can no longer continue.

4.13.3 Soccer

Soccer is the Portuguese national sport, with a long and often glorious tradition of international and club teams. The champions are almost invariably one of the big three leading clubs, Benfica and Sporting from Lisbon and FC Porto from the north. Farense from Faro are the main Algarve team who have been in the top league for some time and regularly host the top teams. The other Algarve clubs play in the lower leagues, though Portimonense from Portimao have had spells in the top flight. If you want to see a league match, the season runs from September through to May.

5. Useful Links

Here are some web links you might find useful:

5.1 *Flights*

- <http://www.easyjet.co.uk>
- <http://www.mytravellite.com>
- <http://www.jet2.com>
- <http://www.monarch-airlines.co.uk>
- <http://www.opodo.co.uk>
- <http://www.teletexholidays.co.uk>
- <http://www.air2000.co.uk>
- <http://www.bmibaby.co.uk>
- <http://www.cheapflights.co.uk>
- <http://www.flightline.co.uk>
- <http://www.kasbah.com/flights.htm>

5.2 *Car Hire*

- <http://gostay.biz/carhire.html>

5.3 *Insurance*

- <http://www.columbusdirect.net>