



Visiting Authentic Alentejo

Sunny, safe, surprisingly inexpensive and accessible (a mere 90-minute drive from Lisbon), laid-back Alentejo (*ah-len-TAY-zhoo*) brings you authentic experiences far from the crowds. The same size as Massachusetts, Alentejo offers vacations to satisfy lovers of the arts, history, outdoors and of course, food and wine. Here, everything is within easy driving distance and rush hour is non-existent. There's something for everyone in the Alentejo!

ART AND HISTORY

Évora, the historic capital of the Alentejo region, with its 16th to 18th century preserved center, and Elvas, featuring the largest bulwark fortification in the world (a must-see for military buffs) are both listed as World Heritage sites by UNESCO. Évora's 16th century Chapel of Bones is lined with the skulls and bones of 5,000 monks! Explore the tiny medieval walled town of Monsaraz, the Baroque architecture and tapestry museum of Portoalegre, the former Jewish quarter in Castelo de Vide and wealthy Santarém, which supported the Portugal's Voyages of Discovery.

While in Beja, be moved by the *Cante Alentejano* (Alentejo Song): Portugal's version of the Blues grew out of the challenges faced by rural communities in the industrializing late 19th century. Performed *a cappella* by a choir, the songs are recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Most attractions are reachable via easy and spectacularly beautiful drives, such as through the São Mamede Natural Park. Fans of the outdoors can also cycle or horseback ride through flatter areas, combining it with birdwatching in the plains of the Castro Verde. There's also hiking in national parks or riding the waves in small, sheltered coves on the Atlantic. And thanks to its lack of light pollution, the Alentejo also boasts Europe's first Starlight Tourist Destination – the Dark Sky Alqueva Reserve.



Images taken from: <http://www.visitalentejo.pt/en/>



WINES OF ALENTEJO

Naturally Unique.

FOOD

In the Alentejo three culinary influences converge: Atlantic, Mediterranean and Mexican!

- Thanks to the Conquistadors, tomato, pepper, sweetcorn, beans and pumpkin arrived from Mexico, along with the potato from Peru.
- *Cozido*, a national dish of meat, cabbage and other vegetables, comes here with lamb raised on the Alentejo plains.
- Nearly wild pigs fattened on acorns from the ubiquitous cork oak trees are source of the Alentejo's famous *porco preto* (black pork). Cured ham (*presunto*), especially from Barrancos, rivals anything from Spain or Italy.
- Spaniard and superstar chef Ferran Adrià feels that seafood from Portugal's Atlantic coast is the world's best. Cod, octopus and ray are found in dishes combining "surf and turf" in exciting ways.
- One of the Alentejo's most distinctive dishes combines red pepper-marinated pork and clams with garlic.
- And like the rest of Portugal, there is a different recipe of salt cod for every day of the year, flavored by regional olive oil and wild herbs, including the ever-present coriander and omega-3-rich purslane.
- Nothing goes to waste, even at dessert time. The egg yolk and sugar tartlets were invented by the nuns, from egg yolks left over after starching their headgear with egg whites.

WHERE TO STAY

Accommodations are available at every price and for every style – at a picturesque *herdade* (homestead or manor house), winery or small, family-run hotels in town centers. But wherever you are, you will find Alentejanos warm, welcoming and proud to share their home.

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

It's an exciting time for travelers to visit the Alentejo. Recognition for this historic, diverse and tasty region is on the increase, yet it remains pleasantly peaceful and uncrowded.



Jan. 2014: Alentejo named one Of 21 top travel destinations worldwide



Aug. 2014: Alentejo named Readers' Choice Best Wine Region to Visit in the World



Feb. 2016: Alentejo included in list of Top 10 Wine Destinations

The New York Times

Jan. 2015: Alentejo referenced as a Top Wine Destination

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The Alentejo Wine Route:

<https://www.visitportugal.com/en/node/73795>

<http://www.vinhosdoalentejo.pt/en/wine-route/gastronomy/>

<https://www.visitportugal.com/en/destinos/alentejo>



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