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Why Algarve, Portugal Should Be On Your Must-Visit List

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Praia Marinha Lagoa ~ Photo: Courtesy of Turismo do Algarve

If you've scrolled through Instagram within the last year or so, then you already know that Portugal is the place to go. It has turned up on more must-visit lists lately than nearly anywhere else. And no wonder—the sun-soaked, western sliver of southern Europe has much to offer: rich culture, beautiful architecture, and a dazzling culinary scene. (Not to mention the well-styled hotels that are the stuff of social media dreams.) While scores of travelers are drawn to the vibrant cities of Lisbon and Porto, would-be visitors should also look to the south—namely, the Algarve region—for an under the radar coastal retreat that's full of authentic Portuguese pleasures.

<http://www.vogue.com/article/algarve-portugal-must-visit-list>

Although equal in beauty to neighboring Mediterranean mainstays like Majorca and St.-Tropez, the Algarve is still enjoying relative obscurity—but with glittering new resorts popping up along the coastline, a handful of Michelin-starred restaurants, and a delicious type of wine you won't find anywhere else, it's only a matter of time before that's no longer the case.



Tivoli Carvoeiro Algarve Resort's outdoor swimming pool ~ Photo: Courtesy of Tivoli Carvoeiro Algarve Resort

What to Do

Beaches are the biggest draw, with more than 150 rolling out their wide, golden shores like welcome mats. Many are bordered by craggy rock cliffs and caves for an extra photogenic effect. Falesia and São Rafael beaches, both in Albufeira, see their fair share of sunbathers, and Praia da Amoreira, in Aljezur, is a sweet spot for surfers, thanks to its abundant waves. If you're searching for that quintessential crescent of Algarvian sand, make your way to Praia da Marinha in Lagoa, one of the Algarve's most celebrated beaches. But rather than drive right up, arrive via the cliff top walk that starts at Praia do Vale de Centeanes in Carvoeiro, some three-and-a-half miles away. Carvoeiro makes an excellent base for a day of beach hopping: The new oceanfront Tivoli Carvoeiro Algarve Resort opened in April after a major five-star renovation, and its chic spa debuted in June. Head to the resort's new Skybar to drink in the view as the sun sets over the Atlantic, but not before enjoying Vale de Covo Beach, an otherworldly sight with crystal-clear water, rock cliffs, and an iconic cave.

The Atlantic coast isn't the only place to enjoy the water in the Algarve. Ria Formosa nature park, with its lagoons, sand dunes, islands, marshes, and mudflats, makes for exceptional hiking and spotting wildlife.



Anantara Vilamoura ~ Photo: Courtesy of Vilamoura Anantara

What to Eat and Drink

The Algarve is awash in sunshine for nearly 3,000 hours each year. And with cool Atlantic waters lapping at the region's shores and an eastern mountain border blocking out hot, dry winds from the north, growing conditions for fresh, flavorful fruits, vegetables, and herbs are excellent. The new **Anantara Vilamoura resort** serves plenty of Algarvian-grown goodness: Guests checking in are welcomed with glasses of sweet carob and shockingly bright orange juice, as well as almonds and figs grown on site. Lunches at the resort's poolside restaurant Ria begin with plump local olives and tender, herb-marinated carrots, plus bowlfuls of fragrant olive oil and tangy, spiced tomato spread waiting to be mopped up with pillowy homemade bread. And that's all before the menus arrive. Softball-size oranges are so abundant on the property that attendants at the adults-only pool flit from one lounge chair to the next proffering whole fruits—peeled, if you prefer—to enjoy while soaking up the sun.



Local foods at Ria restaurant ~ Photo: Courtesy of Lindsay Day

Seafood is another of the Algarve's culinary stars—from clams bathed in oil and garlic to grilled whole line-caught fish to fillets of crisp-skinned sea bass. For that most sought-after of Algarvian treats, octopus, everyone seems to agree that there are only two places to go—Casa do Polvo Tasquinha and Polvo & Companhia, both of which are located in the “octopus capital of the world,” Santa Luzia, roughly 36

miles to the east. To earn bragging rights and to impress even your most intrepid foodie friends, make your way west to Café Correia in Vila do Bispo. There, order up a cold Portuguese Super Bock beer or a glass of vinho verde and a plate of goose barnacles, the area's prized local delicacy. Called "percebes" by locals, the crustaceans grow on slippery, wave-battered boulders in the ocean, which means they can't be farmed. Instead, they're hand-harvested by local fishermen in a dangerous, by-permit-only process. Translation: They're pricey—but it will be Euros well-spent.



Bon Bon ~ Photo: Courtesy of Bon Bon

It's not hard to imagine that the Algarve's bountiful supply of earthly and aquatic ingredients might have something to do with the fact that there are six Michelin-starred restaurants in the region. In quaint Carvoeiro, chef Rui Silvestre's Bon Bon is a perfect example. Silvestre's Atlantic lobster (served with organic egg yolk and imperial caviar) is so fresh, it still tastes like the sea, and his elegant white asparagus—paired with cumin and a São Jorge cheese aged for 24 months—might just make you well up. Although a Michelin-starred restaurant might not be the best place to break out your iPhone, we admit that Bon Bon's tasting menu (four or six courses, with or without wine pairings) will give you plenty of material to make your friends back home jealous. Starting in September, if you fly TAP to Portugal, your Michelin-starred experience can begin before you even touch down: The airline will serve dishes from five Portuguese Michelin-starred chefs—Silvestre, Henrique Sá Pessoa, José Avillez, Miguel Laffan, and Rui Paula—to give passengers a preview of Portugal's haute cuisine.



Cabrita Wines ~ Photo: Courtesy of Cabrita Wines

Some 300 to 350 indigenous varieties of grapes grow in Portugal, and as a result, you can toss a cork in any direction and hit a bottle of delicious, locally produced wine. Negra Mole grapes, however, grow exclusively in the Algarve, and they're used to produce a gentle, drinkable red that hits the palate like a Pinot Noir. For a taste, head to Cabrita Wines in sleepy Silves. The winery, which was founded in 2007 and produces whites, reds, and rosés, offers tastings in a second-floor space that's replete with polished wood and beautiful vineyard views. Also in your tasting lineup: Moscatel and Arinto—two more wines made from native grapes. Save room in your suitcase, because you'll want to bring back a bottle or two.