



The Algarve

The Algarve, in the far south of Portugal, is one of the country's most interesting regions for birdwatching. It has more than 300 species throughout the year including numerous birds of prey, seabirds, shorebirds, ducks, passerines and many others.



Its limited size (approximately five thousand square kilometres) enables visitors to get to know several sites in a single day - from the mountains inland to the coastal marshes - and observe a great number of different species. This variety is also enhanced by the richness of the landscape, which accommodates all of Portugal's main habitats such as extensive cork oak woods, grasslands, coastal lagoons, salt flats and marshland.

Around 40 per cent of the region has been designated Natura 2000 areas under the Birds and Habitats Directives and there are Important Bird Areas (IBA - Birdlife International) in the Algarve. This extensive network of areas of ornithological importance include the Ria Formosa estuary and the Castro Marim marshes, two of the country's most important wetlands where thousands of waterbirds can be found, with rare species such as the swamp hen and Audouin's Gull. The Sagres peninsula and cape is the main migration bottleneck in Portugal for birds of prey and other soaring birds, such as the black stork, the imperial eagle and the Egyptian vulture.

These natural attractions, combined with easy access within the region, a wide variety of accommodation and its popular beach culture, make the Algarve a rich birdwatching area worth discovering. Birdwatching in this beautiful region provides an outdoor experience that should not be overlooked!



Good Conduct

- › Whenever you use the services of a tourism company, check that it is duly licensed and has the necessary permission to operate in protected areas.
- › Give preference to local companies organising birdwatching activities, this will help to boost the local economy.
- › Avoid disturbing nests and breeding bird colonies.
- › If you find an injured bird, contact the following authorities:
GNR - SEPNA (Lisbon) Tel. (+351) 217 503 080
SOS Ambiente Tel. (+351) 808 200 520
RIAS (Ria Formosa Estuary Bird Rehabilitation Centre): Tel. (+351) 927 659 313
- › In the event of a fire: call 117
- › In case of an emergency: call 112



Swamp Hen

Porphyrio porphyrio



This species is resident in the Algarve and particularly numerous around the fresh-water coastal lagoons of the Ria Formosa Estuary, the Vilamoura reed beds and the Salgados Lagoon. A symbol of the Ria Formosa Estuary Nature Park and one of the principal attractions of the region.



Audouin's Gull

Larus audouinii



Present in the wetlands of the Ria Formosa Estuary and Castro Marim. It may easily be observed on the salt flats at the Cerro do Bufo (Castro Marim), in the Ludo area (Formosa Estuary), at the Ferreira Neto Fishermen's Village and at Santa Luzia (Tavira). The Audouin's Gull is present all year round although less abundant in the summer and autumn months.



Flamingo

Phoenicopterus ruber



A common species in the main wetlands of the Algarve especially Castro Marim, the Ria Formosa estuary and Salgados Lagoon. Although resident, it is more abundant in winter and especially in the salt-flat areas where it feeds and rests.

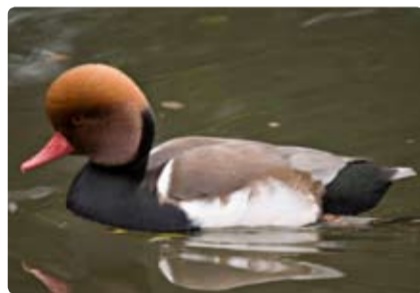


Little Bittern

Ixobrychus minutus



A small heron which is relatively rare in the Algarve. It can be spotted in the reedbeds of the freshwater coastal lagoons, particularly São Lourenço and Salgados. Although a summer migrant, it is frequently seen in autumn and winter also.



Red-Crested Pochard

Netta rufina



A duck with localised distribution in the Algarve, easily observed at the São Lourenço Lagoon and others nearby sites such as Foz do Almagem. Although a resident species, spring and summer are the best times to observe this beautiful bird.



Little Bustard

Tetrax tetrax



A grassland bird which is rare in the Algarve, it can be seen at the Sagres peninsula and Castro Marim. The best time to see it is in the spring when the males are fairly active.



Bee-Eater

Merops apiaster



A summer visitor, present in large numbers from April to September especially in inland areas where there are plenty of bees to feed on. The bee-eater is very easy to observe in the Serra do Caldeirão and the area around the Ria Formosa Estuary (Ludo, Castro Marim, etc).



Azure-Winged Magpie

Cyanopica cyanus



A fairly common bird in the Algarve which is present in nearly all types of habitats. Very abundant in coastal pine forests, especially in the Ludo, Ria Formosa estuary and Serra do Caldeirão.



Red-Rumped Swallow

Hirundo daurica



A summer species, fairly common in the inland areas of the Algarve particularly the Serra do Caldeirão and Monchique mountains. Nests close to river banks and can easily be observed in orchards and meadows.



Sardinian Warbler

Sylvia melanocephala



One of the region's most common species, the warbler appears in a wide variety of habitats year round from the coastal wetlands to the inland cork oak forests.



Little Tern

Sterna albifrons



Fairly common during the spring and summer months especially at the Ria Formosa estuary, Castro Marim and the Alvor estuary. It can be observed close to the coastal salt flats and lagoon areas.



Black-Winged Kite

Elanus caeruleus



A bird of prey regularly seen in the Algarve especially in winter in areas such as the Ria Formosa Estuary and the Vilamoura reed beds, it may also be observed in autumn and spring, especially in the Sagres area.



Black-Eared Wheatear

Oenanthe hispanica



A rare summer migrant which is restricted to the inland areas of the Algarve during the breeding season. The Serra do Caldeirão and Monchique mountains are the best places to observe this passerine, which migrates to Africa for the winter in mid-September.



Dartford Warbler

Sylvia undata



This bird is also relatively common in the Algarve, although its habitat is limited to the inland mountainous areas rich in rock-roses and cork oaks. Resident and easy to observe at sites such as the Serra do Caldeirão, Monchique and the Sagres peninsula.



Collared Pratincole

Glareola pratincola



A summer migrant present in localised areas of the Algarve. It occurs mainly in coastal wetlands particularly the Castro Marim marshes (Cerro do Bufo salt flat) and the Ria Formosa estuary (Santa Luzia and Ludo).



Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus



A fairly common shorebird in the Algarve which is present throughout the year. This bird nests on salt flats and sand dunes, and is very easy to observe. The Ria Formosa and Alvor estuaries, Castro Marim and Salgados lagoon are popular sites where this species can be seen in large numbers.



Griffon Vulture

Gyps fulvus



Although it neither nests nor spends the winter in the Algarve, the griffon vulture is relatively common in this region in the autumn during migration. At that time of year it can be seen in the Sagres area, the Serra do Caldeirão and Monchique mountains, sometimes in flocks of hundreds.

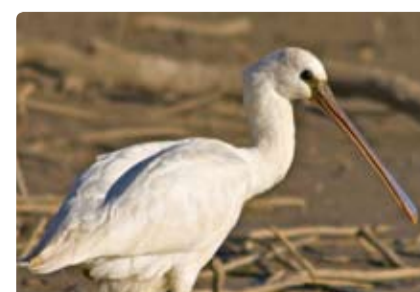


Glossy Ibis

Platalea falcinellus



A regular winter visitor and easy to observe particularly at the Salgados Lagoon and the São Lourenço Lagoon at Quinta do Lago.



Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia



Although resident its population is most abundant in winter. Among the best places for observation are the salt marshes in Castro Marim, Arraial Ferreira Neto in Tavira, Santa Luzia, Ludo in the Ria Formosa, the Salgados Lagoon and Alvor Estuary.



Yelkouan Shearwater

Puffinus yelkouan



A threatened seabird, it regularly migrates along the Algarve coast between July and October. The easiest place to observe this bird from land is Cape St Vincent and it is also possible to see the species anywhere on the Algarve coast from a boat.

(ZC) Serra de Monchique

Description
A mountainous area with rocky peaks, thick cork-oak and chestnut forests and agricultural land. This area has the highest point in the Algarve (900m), with excellent views over the surrounding countryside.

Protected Status
Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000) and Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
A rich variety of woodland birds including the Bonelli's eagle, Dartford warbler, Cirl bunting and rock bunting.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Half a day.

Other activities
Walking and cycling, climbing, adventure sports and natural spring water spa. Also, visits to honey producers, strawberry tree groves and local craft shops.

(ZC) Alvor estuary

Description
Estuary area characterised by extensive marshes, protected from the sea by a long string of dunes with channels, mud banks, salt flats and agricultural fields.

Protected Status
Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000).

Birds
The area is regularly visited by various shorebirds including the Kentish plover, Eurasian thick-knee and back-winged stilt. Flamingos and spoonbill can also be seen there during migration and winter.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Half a day.

Other activities
Boat trips around the estuary, water sports and visits to the "A Rocha" environmental centre which runs ornithological and bird-watching activities.

(HP) Sagres peninsula and cape

Description
Coastal plain with arable land and pasture, vast rocky cliffs and small secluded beaches, as well as dense Mediterranean forests and small pine groves.

Protected Status
Nature Park, Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000), Biogenetic Reserve and Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
A wide variety of grassland birds such as little bustard, thekla lark, Dartford warbler and peregrine falcon. During migration there are thousands of passerines and soaring birds including black storks, Egyptian vultures, honey buzzards and imperial eagles, and seabirds such as the great shearwater and Balearic shearwater.

When to visit
All year round.

Duration of visit
One day.

Other activities
Boat trips to spot sea birds and cetaceans, botany and geology. Walks and visits to local areas of cultural interest (Sagres Fort and São Vicente lighthouse).

(HP) Salgados lagoon

Description
A coastal salt-water lagoon surrounded by agricultural fields and pastureland. Protected from the sea by a long strip of dunes, it is bordered with marshes, reeds and rushes.

Protected Status
Important Bird Area (IBA).

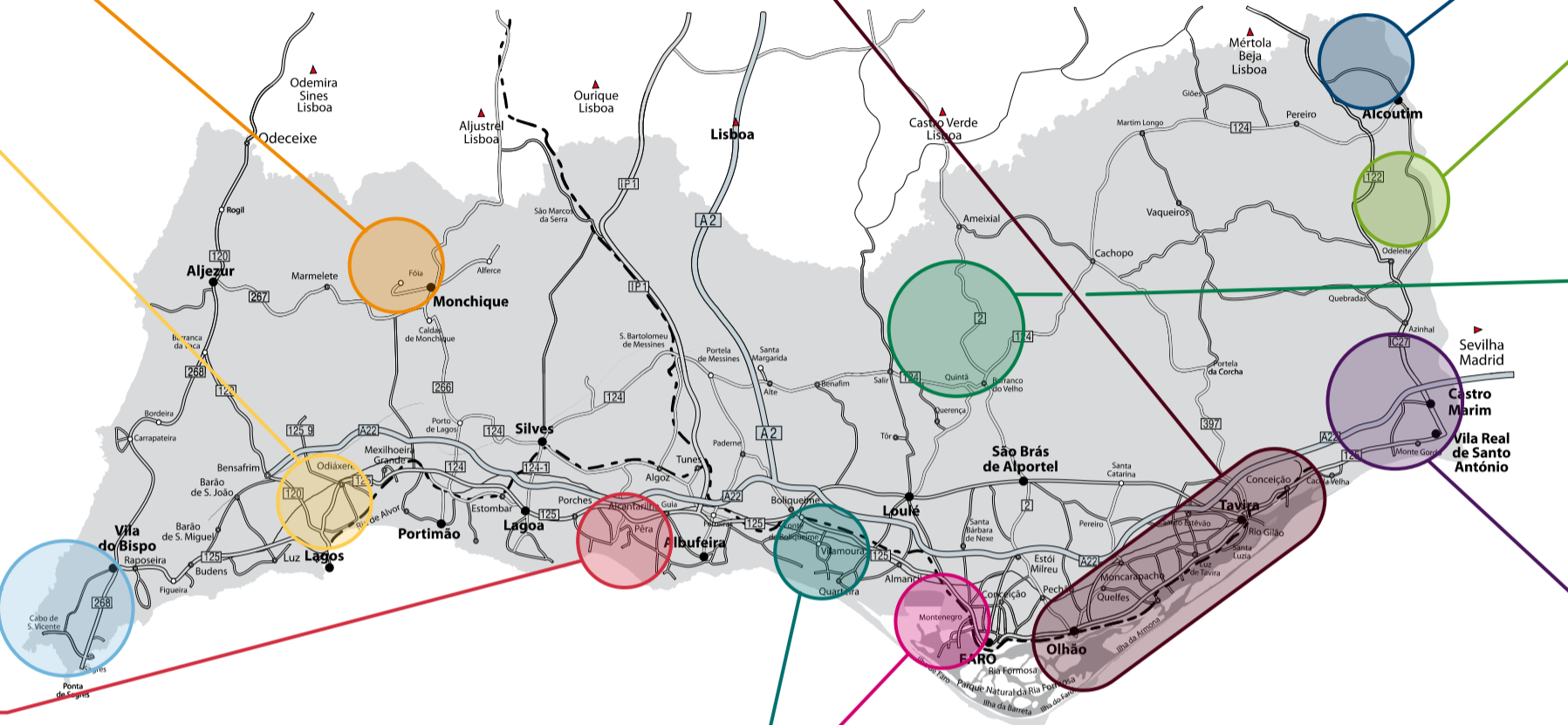
Birds
Nesting place for ferruginous duck, little bittern, swamp hen and avocet. During migration and in the winter numerous shorebirds can be seen such as ruff, whimbrel, and several herons (including the rare Squacco heron) and the glossy ibis. Rare birds such as the white-headed duck and crested coot are regular visitors to the area.

When to visit
All year round.

Duration of visit
Half a day – the afternoon.

Other activities
Walking and going to the beach.

Algarve Map



(ZC) Vilamoura reed beds

Description
Extensive reed beds with various artificial lagoons, channels and drainage ditches. There are also arable fields and Mediterranean orchards nearby.

Protected Status
Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
Little bittern, purple heron, swamp hen and marsh harrier. During migration and in winter numerous passerines may be seen, such as the reed warbler and the penduline tit, and a number of ducks such as the ferruginous duck and red-crested pochard.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Half a day.

Other activities
Going to the beach and visits to the Roman villa at Cerro da Vila.

Ria Formosa Estuary (HP)

Description
The country's third largest wetland area characterised by an extensive estuary area rich in marshes, salt flats, dunes, channels, mudbanks and pools.

Protected Status
Nature Reserve, Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000), Ramsar site and Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
Thousands of waterfowl throughout the year, especially herons, waders and ducks, but also the Audouin's gull, little tern, spoonbill and flamingo. Regularly visited by osprey and black-shouldered kite in the winter.

Places to visit
Ferreiro Neto fishermen village, Quatro Águas and Santa Luzia (Tavira), Fuzeta and Quinta de Marim (Olhão), Ludo (Faro & Loulé). To the west, where there are rich forest areas and a number of coastal lagoons, visitors can see little bittern, purple heron, swamp hen and red-crested pochard. A visit to Quinta do Ludo and the São Lourenço lagoon is also recommended.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Two (or more) days.

Other activities
Boat trips on the river, rambling and visits to the cultural areas of Faro and Tavira.

Alcoutim and River Guadiana (ZC)

Description
An arid zone with few wooded areas and Mediterranean orchards. There are holm oak groves and pockets of thick brushwood on the banks of the Guadiana River where you can find riverside walks with beautiful scenery and viewing points.

Protected Status
Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000).

Birds
Golden oriole, rufous bushrobin, azure-winged magpie, Dartford warbler, Eurasian tree sparrow, red-rumped swallow, little ringed plover and eagle owl. There are regular sightings of the white-rumped swift.

When to visit
In the spring.

Duration of visit
Can be visited in one morning.

Other activities
Signposted walks, visits to the museum and boat trips on the river.

Foz de Odeleite (ZC)

Description
Riverside area, a tributary of the River Guadiana, rich in riverside forests and traditional orchards. Marked walks and rides can be taken on foot or by car.

Protected Status
Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000).

Birds
Rufous bushrobin, bee-eater, rock bunting, azure-winged magpie, moustached warbler, short-toed eagle, common kingfisher and thekla lark among others.

When to visit
In the spring and autumn.

Duration
Half a day.

Other activities
Walking, visits to mountain villages and sampling local cuisine.

Serra do Caldeirão (HP)

Description
A mountainous area covered with thick cork-oak forests and bush featuring numerous mountain streams rich in riverside vegetation.

Protected Status
Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000) and Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
A variety of woodland birds, especially passerines and birds of prey: Dartford warbler, blue rock thrush, Bonelli's eagle and the eagle owl. A number of species can be seen in the spring such as the moustached warbler, red-rumped swallow, golden oriole, orphean warbler, short-toed eagle and the wryneck.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Half a day – the morning.

Other activities
Walking, visits to traditional mountain villages and sampling local gastronomic specialities and local crafts.

Castro Marim marshes and Vila Real de Sto. António (HP)

Description
One of Portugal's largest wetland areas, characterised by extensive marshes and salinas (salt-producing areas) that are still in operation.

Protected Status
Nature Reserve, Special Protection Area (Natura 2000), Ramsar site and Important Bird Area (IBA).

Birds
Waterbirds (over 200 species) throughout the year which include the Audouin's gull, slender-billed gull, Caspian tern, flamingo and spoonbill. The lesser-known short-toed lark and little bustard inhabit the area. It is also a nesting area for the subalpine warbler, collared pratincole, Montagu's harrier and little bittern.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
One day.

Other activities
Visit the salt production areas and discover the historic sites, particularly Castro Marim Castle.

(ZC) Loulé Coastal lagoons

Description
The Garrão, Dunas Douradas and Foz do Almagem lagoons are three small wetland areas surrounded by pine woods and strings of dunes rich in plant life, with vast areas of reeds and rushes.

Protected Status
The Garrão lagoon is included in the Natura 2000 network.

Birds
Various species of waterfowl may be found in this area, particularly the swamp hen, purple heron, red-crested pochard and tufted duck, and also woodland species such as the azure-winged magpie and the hoopoe. In winter Foz de Almagem is an excellent site for watching penduline tits and reed buntings.

When to visit
All year except in the summer.

Duration of visit
Half a day.

Other activities
Walking and going to the beach.



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seaside

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Rua 5 de Outubro
8200-109 Albufeira
Tel. 289 585 279

Alcoutim
Rua 1.º de Maio
8970-059 Alcoutim
Tel. 281 546 179

Aljezur
Largo do Mercado
8670-054 Aljezur
Tel. 282 998 229

Alvor
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8500-016 Alvor
Tel. 282 457 540

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Carvoeiro
Praia do Carvoeiro
8400-517 Lagos
Tel. 282 357 728

Castro Marim
Rua José Alves Moreira n.º 2-4
8950-138 Castro Marim
Tel. 281 531 232

Faro
Rua da Misericórdia, n.º 8-11
8000-269 Faro
Tel. 289 803 604

Lagos
Praça Gil Eanes
(Antigos Paços do Concelho)
8600 Lagos
Tel. 282 763 031

Loulé
Avenida 25 de Abril, n.º 9
8100-506 Loulé
Tel. 289 463 900

Monchique
Largo S. Sebastião
8550 Monchique
Tel. 282 911 189

Monte Gordo
Avenida Marginal
8900 Monte Gordo
Tel. 281 544 495

Olhão
Largo Sebastião
Martins Mestre, n.º 8 A
8700-349 Olhão
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A 22 - Monte Francisco
8950-206 Castro Marim
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Praia da Rocha
Avenida Tomás Cabreira
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Tel. 282 419 132

Quarteira
Praça do Mar
8125 Quarteira
Tel. 289 389 209

Sagres
Rua Comandante Matoso
8650-357 Sagres
Tel. 282 624 873

São Brás de Alportel
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8150-107 São Brás de Alportel
Tel. 289 843 165

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8300 Silves
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Tavira
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8800-329 Tavira
Tel. 281 322 511

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Almancil
Rua de Vale Formoso
8135 Almancil
Tel. 289 392 659

Alte
Estrada da Ponte, n.º 17
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Useful Websites

www.almagem.org
Almagem - Associação de Defesa do Património Cultural e Ambiental do Algarve

www.amal.pt
Grande Área Metropolitana do Algarve

www.gnr.pt
Guarda Nacional Republicana

www.meteo.pt
Weather Institute

www.lpn.pt
Liga para a Protecção da Natureza

www.arocha.org
Associação "A Rocha"

www.spea.pt
Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds

www.icnb.pt
Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e Biodiversidade

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