



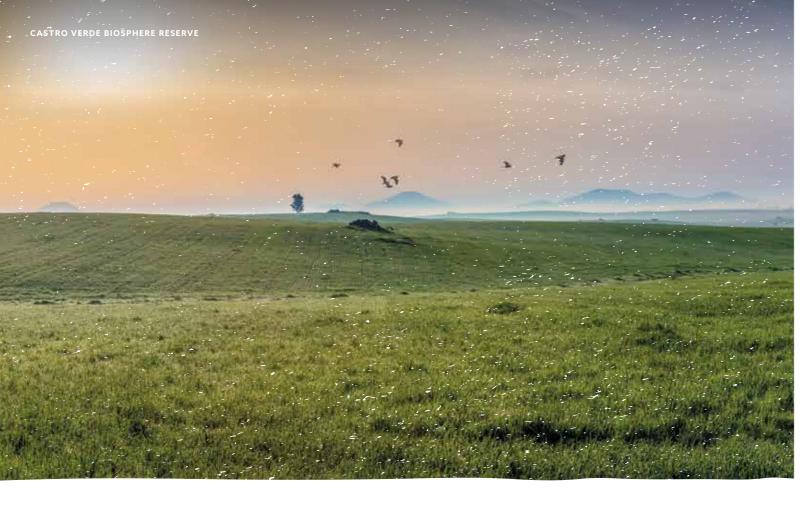
CORK COUNTR

The Alentejo, stretching from the banks of the River Leto to the mountains that surround the Algarve, is the heartland of Portugal. There coastal plains and marble hills have inspired countless epic tales and adventures with the Phoenical and Celts, Romans and Moors each leaving their mark on the unique color. Discover both bliss and thrills in the rolling plains and nounterns with their backyers pristine beaches and villages painted in white and blue. Enjoy the leavest pristine beaches and villages painted in white and blue. Enjoy the leavest plains of the Alentejo into a romantic and enchanting place or sun and sharows. This is home to miles of sandy Atlantic beaches to explore. Here too you find the largest cork forests in the world, some of the best olives, pottery towns, and walled hilltop towns with castles dressed in marble. The name Alentejo comes from the Portuguese words Além and Tejo, meaning beyond the River Tejo. This is almost a third of Portugal and is less than an hour from Lisbon. Go beyond the Tejo and discover a whole other world: The Alentejo.





BEYOND NATURAL BEAUTY



ALENTEJ

ALENTEJO BEYOND NATURAL BEAUTY

If breathtaking landscapes and an immersive escape are what you seek, the Alentejo is the perfect destination. The region is rich in natural beauty and so much more – adventure, culture, flavors and welcoming smiles. Here you will find nature parks that are home to rare and threatened species, prehistoric sites, dolphins and miles of walking trails. The coast is one of the most protected in Europe, preserved and conserved. The conservation of natural areas allows hundreds of protected species to live and thrive in the Alentejo.

Visit the Alentejo and discover what freedom feels like.



CORK

The *Montados* are the cork forests of the Alentejo, home to countless rare species of plants and animals and the largest cork forests in the world. The cork oak, or *sobreiro*, is the soul of the Alentejo, a living landscape that can only be found around the Mediterranean basin.

The cork trees extend for miles, and each tree plays an essential role in this ecosystem. Their bark issued in the seasy and engles the for cert. The trees are protects.

Agreed to Arientejo plains, cork from these the capital role in this ecosystem. Their bark issued to be a protect.

Agreed to Arientejo plains, cork from these the capital role in this ecosystem. Their bark issued to a protect the protection of the preservation of the preser





SADO ESTUARY

From rocky shores to beaches, mountains to valleys, rivers to estuaries, exploring the region's nature parks and reserves is the best way to discover the Alentejo's natural wonders.

About an hour south of Lisbon, the Sado Estuary Nature Reserve features grassy dunes, brackish pools and many species of fauna and flora. At the Sado's mouth, you can hear and see a community of dolphins. This is one of the few places in the world where the species lives in a freshwater habitat.

And, if you listen carefully, you will hear the songs of more than 200 bird species. The biodiversity at the protected Sado River Estuary makes it a sanctuary for many animals and a place where you will be in harmony with nature at its most authentic state.



LAGOAS DE SANTO ANDRÉ E DA SANCHA NATURE RESERVE

Going south along the Alentejo Coast, this nine-mile strip of land near Sines, a bustling port, is a natural oasis. The crystal-blue waters and golden sand of the Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha Nature Reserve are home to rare fish species like eels and roach. And thousands of migrating birds take shelter here between seasons. This protected shore attracts numerous species of birds throughout the year, including Eurasian Coots and the Eurasian Reed Warbler.

Although the Reserve resembles a beach, the lagoons are entirely separated from the Atlantic. Swimming in these waters is safe and calm, and recreational areas are marked to protect nesting species in the shoulder season.

SUDOESTE ALENTEJANO E COSTA VICENTINA NATURE PARK

The Alentejo is home to Portugal's best conserved Atlantic coastline, with miles of wild and often secluded beaches carved into cliffs. The Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina Nature Park covers more than 60 miles of protected land and shore, stretching from São Torpes near Sines to Cape São Vicente, Europe's most southwesterly point, in the Algarve. This protected area has about 30 certified habitats with more than 100 rare species of plants as well as cliffs that hide nests of white storks.

Driving along the whole coast takes fewer than three hours, giving you time to stop along the way to discover magnificent deserted beaches, taste delicious fresh fish and admire the natural silhouettes of the cliffs. The Rota Vicentina (Walking Route and Trail in Costa Vicentina) features more than 460 miles of breathtaking coastal trails with sandy beaches, cliffs and coves. Here you can bodyboard, windsurf and kitesurf. Stop in a small village for fresh seafood, or relax on the Atlantic sands.





VALE DO GUADIANA NATURE PARK

Flowing along the border with Spain, the River Guadiana is wild, lovely and bordered by a valley. This sparsely populated and green land is set between the olive groves of Serpa and the cork oaks of Mértola. Here you can explore the Vale do Guadiana Nature Park. Enjoy the beautiful landscape of hills and fields, and look for the hundreds of protected species like the black stork or the Iberian lynx. Pulo do Lobo is the tallest waterfall in Southern Portugal, standing about 100 feet high. Here, as Portuguese writer José Saramago put it, the "river boils between harsh walls, the rushing of water, hit, flow and wind gnawing a millimeter per century, per millennium, a nothing in eternity." And, the Tapada Grande beach, in Mina de São Domingos, Mértola, provides an opportunity to cool down from the dry Alentejo heat with a swim.



STARGAZING ON THE GREAT LAKE

North of the Vale do Guadiana Nature Park is the Alqueva Great Lake, one of Europe's largest artificial lakes and Portugal's prime stargazing hotspot known as the Dark Sky Alqueva Reserve. During the day you can enjoy numerous water and lakeside activities like kayaking, boating or sitting in the shade sipping a glass of local wine. At night, sit back and enjoy the show as countless shining stars light up the sky. The quietness of the plains at night and the darkness unspoiled by light pollution will make you feel like you are in an open-air planetarium. Be sure to count all the shooting stars you'll see!



SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE NATURE PARK

Rising beyond the hills and the Great Lake, the typical landscape of rolling plains is replaced by a mountain range with a diverse fauna and flora that thrive thanks to the high altitude's humid microclimate. The Serra de São Mamede Nature Park is home to a forest of oaks, chestnuts, olive trees and more than 800 species of plants that share their habitat with reptiles and birds. The walled village of Marvão, set atop a steep mountain, provides a view of raptors soaring in the sky below.

The Serra de São Mamede Nature Park offers hiking as well as mountain biking, from historic village to historic village. The medieval Castle of Portalegre is located within the park and offers a beautiful view over this important Alentejo city, where the white paint of the houses contrasts with the darker tone of the ancient walls.



ADVENTURE TRAVELING



ALENTEJ

*ALENTEJO*WHERE YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE AWAITS YOU

The Alentejo is as diverse as the number of animals that call it home.

Famous for the untouched, preserved beauty of its plains, wildlife sanctuaries, pointed cliffs and pristine beaches, there is another side to the region that allows for more than blissful observation.

Imagine enjoying the beautiful landscape, but from a hot air balloon or paraglider. Or, explore the river that cuts through the Portuguese-Spanish border on foot, horseback or bike. Cork Country is yours to explore.



ADVENTURE PARKS

You can tour the African savanna without leaving Portugal. Besides the nature reserves and biodiversity parks, the Alentejo offers safari parks and wildlife sanctuaries across its endless plains.

There are several parks where animals run free in special natural habitats. Giraffes, impalas, zebras, buffaloes, ostriches and antelopes roam. Visitors can interact with them and learn how to protect their existence.

At the Mora Aquarium, in the heart of the Alentejo, freshwater species are being protected from pollution and overfishing. See otters, piranhas from the Amazon and other fish that are native to Iberian Peninsula rivers.





HIKING

When you come to the Alentejo, don't forget your hiking boots. From mountains and waterfalls, to ocean cliffs and flatlands, there are endless miles of trails to hike in Portugal's wild country. In the Northern Alentejo, explore the greenery of the Serra de São Mamede along the Feel Nature routes to the Portas de Ródão Natural Monument, where two giant hills rise over the landscape like a gate opening up to the Tejo River.

Further south, you can choose from several routes on the TransAlentejo trails that follow the Spanish-Portuguese border. Spectacular views over the hills of the River Guadiana, quaint villages, ancient Stonehenge-like rock circles, centuries-old forts, Roman and Moorish ruins and the Great Alqueva Lake are some of the things you will discover.

For hikes overlooking the Atlantic, Rota Vicentina walking route and trail is a great option. With miles of trails along the Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina Nature Park, this network was named one of the Leading Quality Trails in Europe.

Follow the cliffs and come down to a sandy beach for a swim or lunch by the sea.

BIKING

CABO SARDÃO

Hop on a bike and explore the Alentejo's plains and hills on two wheels, cutting through the groves and roads of one of Portugal's most extensive biking routes. Cycle along the coastline on the EuroVelo 1 trail, also known as the Atlantic Coast Route, and enjoy the protected coastline, small towns, fishing villages and stretches of dunes and beaches on the Rota Vicentina bike routes. Long straight roads with little traffic are shaded by centuries old trees. Hills, capped by castles, rise above the plains. The Alentejo has perfect cycling terrain and services to help along the way.



The Alentejo's sky is a natural wonder. By night, millions of stars brighten it with a magical glow, and during the day, the blue sky is adorned with thousands of birds. Head to protected areas like the Sado Estuary, Castro Verde Biosphere Reserve, Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha Nature Reserve, Vale do Guadiana Nature Park or the Serra de São Mamede Nature Park to find rare species like the Iberian Imperial Eagle or the Lesser Kestrel. On the coast, you can find a variety of seabirds, many passing through at certain times of the year. With hundreds of protected species found in their natural habitats, the Alentejo is a birder's paradise, so grab your binoculars and follow their song.





SUNNY BEACHES



ALENTEJO WHERE THE MAGICAL WILD PLAINS LEAD TO CRYSTAL-BLUE ATLANTIC WATERS

The Alentejo is the heartland of Portugal, home to rolling plains, cork country and endless views. But the Alentejo goes beyond land. In fact, its name means it is beyond the water, beyond (além) the River Tejo. From north to south, the region is surrounded by water, with three main Portuguese rivers crossing the Alentejo and the Atlantic Ocean's long southwestern coast.





THE ALENTEJO COASTLINE

Discover more than 85 miles of beaches along the Alentejo's Atlantic shore, one of the most preserved coastlines in Southern Europe. Rimmed by green cliffs, paths lead you through dunes to the seas, where ocean breezes and golden sands await.

Getting to these pristine beaches is easy, but choosing one is not. From Troia, the closest to Lisbon, to Zambujeira do Mar, Almograve, Malhão, Melides and Porto Covo, there are many options. Wander and try a different beach every day, sampling the breathtaking views the sea cliffs have to offer. Or, pick one, and come back again and again.





RIVERS AND LAKES

Amid the rolling plains of Alentejo, the river beaches and lakes are an oasis, a refreshing refuge from the drier climate. Dive into the fresh waters of Tapada Grande, Alamal, Monsaraz, Mourão, Amieira or Santa Clara.

Reservoirs like Montargil and Maranhão are also great places for water sports and sailing or just relaxing. Choose from fishing, hiking along the water's edge, rafting or relaxing on a beach. You can rent a boat, or even a houseboat, canoe or kayak. There are lots of choices under the endless Alentejo sky.



CULTURE AND HISTORY





*ALENTEJO*CULTURE IS EVERYWHERE

A land of light, the Alentejo has been a cultural crossroads for Phoenicians, Celts, Romans and Moors. Each of these ancient peoples came to the Alentejo, and each left a lasting imprint. But the story does not end there. With the rise of the Portuguese nation in the 12th century, the Alentejo evolved into a country within a country, with its own arts, pottery, rugs, songs, styles, cuisine, way of seeing life and way of speaking. A land of poets, captains, builders, farmers, artists and ranchers, the cultural past of the Alentejo is alive, vibrant and yours to discover.



ROOTS

The Alentejo's villages and towns are open-air galleries where history is carved in stone. One of the most fascinating prehistoric remains in the world is the Cromlech of Almendres, near Évora. This megalithic archaeological site dates to between 4,000 and 3,000 BC.

The large circles of stones were aligned to the stars and may have been a religious place of worship.

Across the hills and rolling plains, many mysterious prehistoric sites speak to ancient rituals, gods and the founding of human culture millennia ago. Here stones mark sites of worship with ancient altars and places whose meaning has been lost in time. The ancient history of the Alentejo is extensive, and easily explored by bike, foot or car.





HISTORYALL AROUND

In the Alentejo, history is everywhere. The Romans flourished here for centuries, building roads, vast farms, wineries and villas. Today, you can explore their legacy. In the Serra de São Mamede, discover the lost Roman city of Ammaia. Évora boasts a rare standing Roman temple as well as Roman walls. Further south, near Vidigueira, the amazingly preserved São Cucufate villa offers a rare glimpse of the lifestyle of Romans in the Alentejo.

As the Roman Empire in the West fell, Moorish armies came from North Africa and ruled the Alentejo for 500 years. They profoundly influenced the culture. Portuguese words for watermill, rice, olives, olive oil, wild boar and even *açorda*, Alentejo's wonderful bread stews, are a testimony to the Arab influence on agriculture and cuisine. The village of Mértola, perched on the edge of the River Guadiana, is where Islamic heritage is most striking. The only ancient mosque in Portugal is today a parish church. Mértola has a museum as well as the biennial Islamic Festival.

As Portugal emerged as a nation after a legendary battle on Alentejo soil, near Ourique in 1139, the Reconquest inspired the character of Portugal and the fate and culture of the Alentejo. This period saw the construction of dozens of imposing castles and fortified villages, especially in the fortress towns of Marvão, Estremoz and Beja, as well as the Castle of Monsaraz.

In the castle town of Terena, the chapel of Boa Nova de Terena, a unique fortified chapel, is worth exploring. To see Gothic influences, visit the hilltop city of Santarém, Portugal's Gothic Capital, with its wealth of churches, walls and palaces from the Middle Ages.

Between the 15th and 16th centuries, the Age of Exploration took Portuguese ships to every corner of the globe and brought the world back to the Alentejo. Churches, convents, imposing aqueducts and palaces worthy of kings were built. A university was founded in Évora. And a unique style was created: the Manueline, the lavish architectural ornamentation found in villages such as Alvito and Viana do Alentejo, and in cities like Elvas and Évora.

Mannerist and Baroque art filled every corner and nook.



ÉVORA AND ELVAS: WORLD HERITAGE CITIES

The legend of Elvas, "Guardian of the Frontier," is written in every stone of this walled city's many massive fortifications. They include medieval and later walls, three small forts, a historic center, aqueduct and the star-shaped Santa Luzia and Nossa Senhora da Graça forts. No surprise, this proud walled border city and its fortifications have also earned UNESCO classification as a World Heritage Site.





ROMAN TEMPLE OF ÉVORA

Walled Évora is an open-air museum of a city and a bucket list must for any visitor. Its historic center has Visigoth, Roman and Arab influences that preserve traces of life from more than 2,000 years ago.

The beauty of Évora shines through the many historic sites: the Roman Temple; Cathedral;
Church of São Francisco with its famous Chapel of Bones; Church of São João Evangelista, the house of Garcia de Resende's window; and the expansive Giraldo Square. But it is in the 15th and 16th centuries, when Évora became the second seat of the Royal Court, that this city reached its peak. Today, this beauty remains intact and a unique example of the golden period in Portugal. For all this and more, its historic center has been classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

CRAFTS WITH A SENSE OF PLACE

With the mingling of centuries of traditions and culture, there are many fine crafts to explore in the Alentejo. Portalegre tapestries, Arraiolos rugs, Monsaraz and Mértola blankets, painted furniture, leather, cork, copper, clay and ironwork are all truly unique.

Here you'll find examples of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: the Estremoz Clay Figures, which reflect both the past and dreams of the region, and the unique cowbells, a defining craft of Alcáçovas.



POTTERY - TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

LOCAL SONGS, UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

In Alentejo there is a unique two-part song unlike any other: the Cante Alentejano.

Once the song of the fields, the Cante is a song of precision without instrumental accompaniment. At festivals and events, in town squares and taverns, Cante groups fill the air with stories of the countryside, melancholy, love and longing. Stories so beautiful, they reach the ears and hearts of the world. Come listen to the Alentejo's soul!





THE "CAMINO" OF SANTIAGO: AN ANCIENT JOURNEY

Legend has it that the pilgrimage to worship the relics of the apostle St. James began in the 9th century. Year after year, the legend has grown, and the *Caminos's* trail network has spread over Europe. But in the Alentejo, the way was never forgotten.

In the Alentejo this ancient tradition lives on and has a lasting impact on local culture. The origin of the *Camino* is linked to the Order of Santiago (St. James), which had its regional headquarters at Alcácer do Sal. Whether on the Alentejo's Central or Eastern Ways, at every step you will discover relics, adventures and faith. More than just a hike, this pilgrimage is an opportunity to discover secret places, natural beauty, art, cuisine, history and stories.

CUISIN

CULTINE

CUISINE



ALENTEJ

ALENTEJO DISCOVER THE FLAVORS OF PORTUGAL'S SOUL

Influenced by a Mediterranean climate and Roman and Moorish heritage, the Alentejo cuisine is unique in Portugal. There is influence from the Age of Exploration too, where seasonings like coriander arrived from the East. It is a whole other world of flavors, with olive oil, local cheese, a wheat bread baked only in Alentejo, bread stews (Açorda), local meats and fish all playing leading roles. The Alentejo's breads are rich, crusty and wonderful. But don't forget the divine pastry and sweets created in monasteries and convents centuries ago or the many wines produced in the varied climates and soils of these lands.

In the Alentejo, a meal starts with a variety of appetizers. Cured ham, or Presunto de Barrancos PDO, is a local delicacy, and goat and sheep cheeses from Nisa and Serpa usually accompany thin slices of cured ham. Olives, whether black or green, harvested from olive groves throughout the Alentejo are a staple. The *pièce de résistance* of food traditions in Alentejo is fresh bread dipped in olive oil, sometimes flavored with a drop of vinegar and a pinch of sea salt.



Other Alentejo specialties include roasted peppers, bread stews and octopus salad flavored with onion and peppers seasoned in olive oil. Some typical Alentejo foods share recipes with neighboring Spain, as in the case of the Alentejo gazpacho, a tomato and cucumber based soup served are. The Bifanas de Vendas Novas are simple and tasty pork sandwiche acceded in a crusty white roll.

Is for the main course, you can choose between local meat and fish. The Camputentejana PDO and Mertolenga PDO are types of beef unique to the Alentejo. One famous gional dish is Carne de Porco à Alentejana (Alentejo-style pork), a siew of pork cubes and clams with potatoes and lots of coriander. In fact, coriander is at the heart of Alentejo cuisine. The herb is most frequently used in the south of Portugal.





On the fish side, there is rich fish stew, fresh crab, grilled fish and octopus.

Many recipes call for rice or potatoes and a delicious sauce of tomato, garlic, onions and, of course, olive oil.

But there are also traditional vegetarian options in Alentejo cuisine, such as *Açorda*, bread stew with coriander. It may also be served with cod, one of several variations.

And we should mention two more things that are 100 percent Alentejo:

Migas à Alentejana, a bread-based puree, and Alentejo sausages such as the thick Paio sausages that vary from town to town.

Almeirim is a farming town known for its *Sopa da Pedra*, or rich stone soup. Legend has it that *Sopa da Pedra* was invented by a traveling friar who asked the locals for a pot and water to make his stone soup. He kept asking for new ingredients, and the soup became a rich feast of meat, beans and vegetables.

No trip to the Alentejo is complete without dessert.

Travelers with a sweet tooth have a lot to get excited about, from the traditional egg and cinnamon pudding Sericaia or Pinhoadas (pine nut nougat), to convent-made pastry, Pampilhos from Santarém and more.

In the Alentejo, an authentic meal can be found anywhere, from humble taverns to the region's chef-driven eateries.

There is no need to seek haute-cuisine restaurants:
The tastiest and most heart-warming meals can be found in traditional (and affordable) eateries, where locals will treat you like family. Cuisine and hospitality are always linked in the Alentejo, so come sit at the table and be delighted by the flavors of Portugal's soul.





WINE COUNTRY



ALENTEJ

ALENTEJO WINE COUNTRY

Alentejo is Portugal's wine country too, where centuries of tradition are combined with the latest technologies to produce world-class wines. The region's vineyards pre-date the Romans and today house more than 250 producers. The soils are very diverse, with varied outcroppings of clay, schist, granite, marble and limestone – perfect for vine cultivation. The ideal climate for winemaking paired with the wisdom of local winemakers who create unique wines ranging from light to bold, both white and red. As for the grapes varieties, there are many and almost all distinct to the region.

They include the whites grapes Antão Vaz, Arinto and Roupeiro, and the reds Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez and Trincadeira.

Try the Vinho de Talha, a wine aged in an amphora, the exact way the Romans made their wines more than 2,000 years ago.



In the Alentejo, wine has been cultivated for millennia, and today you can experience its creation and learn from local winemakers. During the grape harvest, in mid-to-late summer, many wineries and farms offer a harvesting experience that includes grape stomping and cellar tours. See the winemaking process first hand and discover how each grape variety is chosen and pairings are made, and learn how Alentejo's precious cork is used to preserves each bottle of wine. The Alentejo Wine Route is the perfect starting point for an introduction to local wine regions and to plan your itinerary to discover the wines of Alentejo. Each stop will give your glass of Alentejo wine a more intense flavor, rich in history and tradition.





AREFUGE AMID PORTUGAL'S ROLLING PLAINS





ALENTEJO A REFUGE AMID PORTUGAL'S ROLLING PLAINS

In the Alentejo your lodging options are many. Pick a farmhouse or *monte*, surrounded by nature, or a cozy lodging in a historic village. Or try a luxurious lodge set in a former palace, or even camping or glamping in nature parks. Anywhere in the Alentejo can be a blissful refuge with its wild and wonderful countryside.

And no matter where you stay, the authentic and warm Alentejo people are eager to share their wonderful food and culture and will always welcome you with the best experiences the region has to offer. Come to the Alentejo and you will feel at home in a place unlike any other.

Once in the Alentejo, you can explore like a prince or princess and book a room in a palace, castle or monastery that has been transformed into a lavish inn.

In a place where history runs deep, and Roman, Moorish and medieval influences are still felt, this is a unique way to explore the Alentejo's history.

Or, seek out a farm-stay in one of many classic *montes*, single-story whitewashed farmhouses, on the Alentejo plains, where you can rise with the sun and the sounds of nature. Rural tourism operators offer friendly retreats that will let you savor life in the Alentejo.



In a world full of changes, the Alentejo is a timeless refuge. Over the millennia countless cultures have left their mark here – but the plains, cork forests and sandy shores transformed them as well. From Moorish waterwheels or Roman villas to medieval castles, the Alentejo feels eternal and inviting. Lose yourself in a grove of ancient cork trees, or on plains that go on as far as the eye can see, or on green bluffs overlooking a blue Atlantic. Yesterday, today and tomorrow all blend in this ancient place, where time, much like the sunlight, is unlike anywhere else on earth.

The Alentejo has something wonderful for everyone.

Come explore the lands of Cork Country!



Turismo do Alentejo, ERT

Rua dos Infantes, n.º 10 R/C 7800-953 Beja, Portugal

Tel.: +351 284 313 540

geral@turismodoalentejo-ert.pt

Agência Regional de Promoção Turística do Alentejo/Alentejo Promotion Office Rua Manuel Batista Reis, n.º 6, R/C

7570-284 Grândola, Portugal

Tel.: +351 269 498 680

info@turismodoalentejo.pt

Turismo de Portugal

Headquarters: Rua Ivone Silva, Lt. 6 1050-124 Lisboa, Portugal

Tel.: +351 211 140 200

info@turismodeportugal.pt



www.visitalentejo.com





CO-FUNDED BY





