

The Quick Algarve Holiday Guide

At the southernmost tip of Portugal lies the Algarve, one of the best-kept holiday destination secrets in Europe. It keeps miles of beautiful, sandy beaches, several resort towns, year-round sunshine and great weather for all 12 months. Getting lodgings in the Algarve region is a painless procedure because there are special tourist facilities in nearly every municipality there. It's a veritable holiday paradise, no matter when you go there.

Sand, Sun and Sights

Beaches are obviously the primary attraction in the Algarve. There are entire villages and towns that thrive on the millions of tourists that flock annually to the Portuguese shores. Notable coastlines include the Praia da Marinha, winner of the local 1998 *Golden Beach* award, and the Praia da Rocha, one of the best-known beaches in the region.

The weather remains mild to warm the whole year, with temperatures ranging from 15° to 30° C. The region is relatively dry, without the kind of rough storms and rainy seasons that tend to plague tropical and coastline areas. This leaves you lots of time to explore all the attractions that dot the Algarve, from the rich culture of the central area to the picturesque beaches that stretch all along the coastline.

10 Travel Tips for the Algarve

1. Rent a car - The Algarve region is one place where you probably wouldn't want to stay put. While you can get around well enough on foot and public transport, there are lots of sights to explore from inside out and a car will really come in handy. And because the whole area is contiguous, it's not very hard to get a sampler of the whole area's sights, cultures and heritage.

2. Rent a boat while you're at it - Some of the more breathtaking sights aren't even on the mainland itself. There are some fantastic caves and grottoes worth an entire album themselves – and most are accessible via a ride on a motorboat.

3. Go by town - Don't limit yourself to visiting just one town. Most of the towns, villages and municipalities have their own little tourist specialties. Caldas de Monchique, for example, is a spa town in the mountainous area that has powers supposedly imbued with healing powers.

4. Nature knows best - It's not just the beaches that are worth a vacation album in the Algarve. There are also numerous zoos and nature reserves like the Ria Formosa Natural Park, which should make the kids particularly happy.

5. Plan activities for the kids beforehand - There are lots of adults-only activities in the Algarve, so alternative activities for the kids are a must. Besides, it'll be time for you and your spouse to unwind at the casinos and some of the best golf courses in Portugal.

6. Hunt down some history - There are also a lot of historical areas in the Algarve, especially because it was occupied by a variety of peoples ranging from the Moors to the Romans. All the influences show, from the rich and religious heritage to the

multicultural architectural style.

7. Don't get huffy with the hotels - If you weren't able to get a room at a big hotel, don't worry. You'll find it easy enough to find inns and cottages for rent once you get to the area. Remember, this is a region that specializes in tourism. Resorts and other forms of accommodations are plentiful.

8. Go to market - The Algarve is a treasure trove, especially if you're the kind of person that collects souvenirs. The markets are just bursting full of novelties and knick-knacks that you could take back home. And if you're in the mood for some fresh fish, fishing towns like Portimao will be great places to get breakfast.

9. Trust the locals - The advice they give is usually given in good faith and for your own benefit. If they say that a particular beach is unsafe – and some of them are – listen. Similarly, you could ask them the best places where you and your family can take a sunny dip.

10. Call ahead - Although the Algarve isn't very well known in the United States, it's a vacation mainstay in Europe. Millions of people from the EU visit the Algarve each year. If you really want a smooth and hassle-free vacation, you'd best make arrangements beforehand. That'll let you get the best hotel rooms and give you access to the most prestigious golf courses in the area.

The Algarve region is often mentioned as a great vacation spot for all in the family. With a wide range of activities and endless natural beauty, it's the kind of place you never want to leave behind.