

algarve,
europe's
most famous
secret

faro

municipality

2013 . 3rd Edition

faro

Faro's beaches and the Ria Formosa, where flamingos can be seen taking to the air, mark the border with the sea. On the flat terrain behind are the houses and buildings of Faro, green vegetable plots that thrive on the fertile land and water wheels that were once used to draw fresh water from the ground, another reminder of the city's Moorish heritage. In the distance, a semi-circle of gentle hills, their slopes clad with fruit trees, frames the landscape. Villages where life goes on at the same easy pace as in centuries past, where un-assuming churches conceal art works of astonishing beauty, where traces of the magnificence of the Romans can still be found: these are among the charms of Faro and its municipality, an ideal starting point for exciting voyages of discovery.

HISTORY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF FARO

The Ria Formosa lagoon attracted human occupants from the Palaeolithic age until the end of pre-history. During that time a settlement grew up - Ossónoba - which was an important town during the period of Roman occupation and, according to historians, the forerunner of present-day Faro. From the 3rd century onwards and during the Visigothic period, it was the site of an Episcopal see. With the advent of Moorish rule in the 8th century, Ossónoba retained its status as the most important town in the southwest corner of the Iberian Peninsula.

In the 9th century it became the capital of a short-lived independent principedom and was fortified with a ring of defensive walls. At this time the name Santa Maria began to be used instead of Ossónoba. Later on the town was known as Harune, whence its current name, Faro.

After a period of upheaval caused by the political and military fragility of the town's Moorish rulers, in 1249 Faro became part of Portuguese territory, thus completing the Christian reconquest of what is now Portugal.

In the centuries that followed, Faro became a prosperous place, thanks to its geographical position, its safe harbour and growing trade in salt and agricultural products from the interior of the Algarve, increased by the voyages of exploration known as the Discoveries. At this time the town had a large and active Jewish population: the first Portuguese book was printed locally on the Jewish community's initiative at the end of the 15th century.

Recognising the town's growth, in 1499 King Manuel set in motion major changes to the urban fabric, with the construction of new facilities - a hospital, the Espírito Santo (Holy Spirit) church (later rebuilt and run by the "Misericórdia" charity and welfare institution), a customs house, a slaughterhouse and so on, outside the city walls and along the coast.

In 1540 Faro was elevated to the status of a city and in 1577 it became the site of the Episcopal see of the Bishop of the Algarve, who had previously had his throne in Silves. In 1596 it suffered a severe mauling at the hands of raiding soldiers led by the Earl of Essex. Essex's men sacked the city, then set it alight, damaging its fortifications and its churches.

The 17th and 18th centuries were a period of expansion for Faro. A new series of battlements was built during the War of Restoration (1640-1668), enclosing the urban area and tracts of arable land in a huge semi-circle facing the Ria.

The city remained within these confines until the end of the 19th century. After years of gradual growth, its expansion has accelerated significantly in the last few decades.

VISITING FARO

The walls that surrounded the town in Moorish and medieval times; the vestiges of the past still to be seen in churches and museums; the refreshing green of a garden beside the Ria and the sea; the outline of noble residences that bear witness to Faro's splendour in centuries past; narrow streets of whitewashed houses that recall the town's Moorish heritage: these are among the sights to be savoured on a walk around Faro, a city where there is lots to see, to enjoy and to remember.



HISTORIC CENTRE

Faro's old town consists of three distinct areas - Vila-Adentro, Mouraria and Bairro Ribeirinho - each of which marks a separate stage in the city's development from the Christian reconquest to the town plan that ultimately took shape in the 17th and 18th centuries.

VILA ADENTRO

A visit to Vila Adentro is not complete without a walk through the streets that huddle in the shade of the city walls, among the whitewashed houses, the arches that link the buildings and the fine homes of the Cortes and Sarria families, of Captain Manuel de Oliveira and José Maria Assis.

ARCO DA VILA

This monumental arch, inaugurated in 1812, was built to a design by the Italian architect Francisco Xavier Fabri over one of the medieval gates set into the ramparts. It has a niche with a statue of Saint Thomas Aquinas that is of Italian origin. Inside there is a horseshoe gate from the Moorish walls, the only one of its kind in the Algarve.



CHAPEL OF NOSSA SENHORA DO Ó (OUR LADY OF Ó)

This little chapel, also known as Nossa Senhora D'Entre Ambalás Águas, is of medieval origin and was commissioned by the seafarers. It stands on the spot where, during the Islamic period, a statue of the Virgin mentioned in one of the Canticles of Santa Maria written by King Alfonso X of Castile (Alfonso the Wise, 1221-1284), was probably placed.

It was rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake and is at present used as one of the offices of the Civil Government.

TOWN HALL

Another 19th century building, built on the site of the old municipal headquarters. Its façade was altered in the 1940s and 50s.

CATHEDRAL

This building is of medieval origin, and corresponds to the old Igreja Matriz de Santa Maria, which was commissioned in 1251 by the Archbishop of Braga, D. João Viegas. All that remains of the original building is the first floor of the tower that stands over the main façade and two chapels in the transept. In 1577, it was raised to the status of an Episcopal see and in 1596 it was sacked and burned by the English troops of the Earl of Essex, necessitating major rebuilding work which continued after the earthquakes of 1722 and 1755.



The interior of the three naves, with columns of the Tuscan order, contains one of the finest and most valuable collections of the 17th and 18th centuries in the Algarve. In the chancel, there is an altarpiece with images of Nossa Senhora da Assunção (Our Lady of the Assumption), São Pedro (St Peter) and São Paulo (St Paul), and a choir stall, both dating from the 17th century. Two Italian canvases painted by Guerini and tiles with a blue, yellow and white pattern are also part of the ornamentation of this chapel. The chancel chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament has a very interesting altarpiece from the last quarter of the 17th century, notable for its monumental throne in the shape of a pyramid. The chancel chapel of Santo Lenho (the Holy Cross) contains the only altarpiece-reliquary in the Algarve. The tomb of the Bishop, D. António Pereira da Silva, who commissioned the cathedral, is set into the side wall. Of the side chapels, those dedicated to Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of the Conception) and São Domingos (St. Dominic) deserve special mention for their tiled walls and their gothic style; also, the Chapel of Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres (Our Lady of Pleasures), a little gem of Baroque architecture, with an octagonal baldachin, which makes it unique, and showing a wide range of techniques and materials in its composition: carving, plaster, mirrors, inlaid marble, painting and tiles. The Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Our Lady of the Rosary), associated with the confraternity of native Africans since the 16th century, has a Baroque altarpiece, made by Francisco Ataíde in 1724, two interesting lamps with African figures and tile panels from the end of the 17th century. Finally, next to the high choir, there is a flamboyant Baroque pipe organ with painted chinoiserie motifs.

TREM AND ARCO MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY

This is a building that was formerly in military use that has been converted to house exhibitions of contemporary Portuguese art.

EPISCOPAL PALACE

This palace was built after the invasion by the English troops of the Earl of Essex, probably during the reign of Bishop D. Fernando Martins Mascarenhas. It is one of the finest examples of the "chã" (plain) style of architecture in the Algarve. It underwent some alterations after the 1755 earthquake. The doorway and the outline of the pyramid-shaped "tesoura" (scissor) roofs contrast with the strict geometric lines of the façade. In the atrium, stairway and the three ceremonial rooms, there are fine examples of rococo wall tiles from the third quarter of the 18th century.

Other special features are the Baroque shelves in the library, decorated with "chinoiserie" motifs, and the collection of paintings.

EPISCOPAL SEMINARY

Parallel to the city walls, this is a vast structure dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, connected to the palace by a walkway. The windows, with their ornate stonework, date from the first phase of construction, while the remainder is from a later period and bears the hallmarks of the Italian architect Francisco Xavier Fabri, who built a number of buildings in Faro. There is an inner patio with a window in the Manueline style (16th century).

TOY MUSEUM (ARCO MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY)

The toys on display were part of the collection of Manuel Baptista, bought by the municipality in 2002. The collection consists of a wide range of 600 toys from the first half of the 20th century, coming from different countries - Portugal, Germany, England, France, Spain, Italy, Czechoslovakia, the USA and Japan - including dolls, cars, trains, planes, kitchen sets and others. You can go on a journey to see the toys from an earlier era. There is also a magnificent view over the Ria Formosa.

RAMPARTS AND CASTLE

Faro's defensive walls were built by the Muslim prince Ben Bekr in the 9th century. The two barbican towers, which defend the entrance to the Arco do Repouso (Arch of Rest), have their origin in the reinforcement of the city's defences during the 12th/13th centuries. The attack on the city in 1596 by soldiers led by the Earl of Essex inflicted considerable damage on the walls which, after they had been rebuilt, were adapted for the use of cannon and integrated within the city's new defences. The castle, an important defensive structure, was also altered to meet the new challenges of artillery (17th century), with the addition of a ravelin. Major modifications were again made at the beginning of the 20th century when an industrial plant was built on the site, but the castle's imposing bulk is still discernible. In addition, a long breach was opened in the city walls to allow access via the Rua do Castelo.

INFANTE DOM HENRIQUE (PRINCE HENRY THE NAVIGATOR)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM / MONASTERY OF NOSSA SENHORA DA ASSUNÇÃO (OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION)

Built on the site of the old Jewish quarter on the initiative of two pious sisters born in Beja, work on the church and monastery continued from 1528 until the 1560s. The building was completed by Queen Catarina (1507 - 1578) and is a major example of early Renaissance art in the Algarve. The church door has pilasters with figurative decoration. The cloister is on two storeys, with four sets of arcades and decorative gargoyles in the shape of animals. The decoration on the church dome is rococo (18th century). There is an interesting lookout tower (16th century). The museum houses a major collection, particularly from the Roman period - from when the "Ocean mosaic" dates, as well as carved stones found in Faro bearing inscriptions that refer to Ossonoba, and busts of emperors from the ruins at Milreu - as well as a valuable collection of religious art.



CHAPEL OF NOSSA SENHORA DO REPOUSO (OUR LADY OF REST)

This small chapel was built in the 18th century with the patronage of Queen D. Mariana, inside one of the Moorish arches in the walls, so as to house the statue of Nossa Senhora do Repouso. Inside there is a wooden altarpiece.

MOURARIA (MOORISH QUARTER)

The Manuel Bivar Gardens are the site of the Praça da Rainha (Queen's Square), created at the end of the 15th century, and an elegant bandstand dating from the end of the 19th century: they are like a cool reception room for visitors to the city. After seeing the gardens it is time to wander around the Mouraria, the old Moorish quarter, which contains a variety of buildings charting the different stages in Faro's history. These include the many houses whose façades are ennobled by carved stonework, French windows and impressive cornerstones and which have the pyramidal "tesoura" roofs typical of the architecture of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, as well as buildings born of the revivalist fashions of the beginning of this century: the Palácio Belmarço, commissioned by a wealthy merchant, and the Banco de Portugal building, executed in the neo-Manueline style with an distinctly Moorish-looking doorway. The tour ends at the Café Aliança, the oldest café in Faro and a place of strong cultural traditions, which stands right beside the garden that was our starting point.

MISERICÓRDIA CHURCH

The church, with its adjoining hospital, was built at the end of the 16th century at the instigation of Bishop Afonso Castelo Branco, over the old Manueline Espírito Santo (Holy Spirit) chapel and hospital. It is the only church in the Algarve built in the form of a Greek cross, to a plan that is believed to have been the work of an architect from Lisbon. The 1755 earthquake caused extensive damage, prompting Bishop Francisco Gomes to renovate the façade and build a new hospital (1795-1815) to a design by the Italian architect Francisco Xavier Fabri, who was also responsible for the Arco da Vila on the other side of the square. The high altar has an interesting mannerist altarpiece from the early part of the 17th century. The triumphal arch, decorated with a profusion of rococo carving, connects the high altar with the two side altarpieces. There is a fine collection of 18th century statuary. The arcades of the hospital building - which recall another of Fabri's works, the Ajuda Royal Palace in Lisbon - establish a harmonious connection with the main body of the church.

ALGARVE REGIONAL MUSEUM

Founded in 1963 by Carlos Porfírio. This museum houses a valuable collection of objects and photographs relating to the culture of the Algarve, as part of a Regional Interpretation Centre. It is located in the building which is home to the District Assembly.

CHAPEL OF NOSSA SENHORA DO PÉ DA CRUZ

This chapel dates from the 17th century and has been altered since. The top of the façade and the large front window are profusely decorated in the rococo style (third quarter of the century). The main chapel and triumphal arch are adorned with Baroque carving. The fine collection of sculptures and pictures in the Baroque interior is especially noteworthy. Dating from the third quarter of the 18th century, there is a monumental Station of the Cross on the rear façade, bearing a depiction of Nosso Senhor dos Aflitos (Our Lord of the Afflicted) made of cut tiles (18th century). The cupola is decorated in the rococo style.

THE 17TH CENTURY CITY WALLS

Faro retains a section of the defensive walls built in the 17th century that once surrounded the whole of the city, but which had already been partially destroyed by the beginning of the 19th century. Troops on the Liberal side made use of them when they defended the city against Miguelist forces (the struggle between those who believed in a constitution and their opponents, who favoured a return to absolutism). The area enclosed by the walls corresponds to Faro's old town.

CELEIRO DE SÃO FRANCISCO (GRANARY OF ST. FRANCIS)

This octagonal structure (18th century) was built within a garden as a place to take shelter from the heat. The representations in mortar work of Hercules and the giant Adamastor, which adorn two sides of the façade, are interesting examples of the art and tastes of the age. The arms of the nobleman on whose orders the building was erected are visible over the door.

BAIRRO RIBEIRINHO

A tour of the Bairro Ribeirinho must include a walk around the narrow streets where façades with decorative stonework can be seen here and there, as well as the pyramidal "tesoura" roofs. Of particular interest are: the Palácio dos Bívira, the finest neoclassical building in the Algarve (early 19th century), with its ornate main doorway and long row of French windows; the 18th century Solar do Capitão-Mor, a fine example of Faro's Baroque architecture; the Casa dos Lamprier, which was home to an English family in the 18th century and whose windows boast fine mouldings; and the Casa dos Azulejos, built in 1926, which has an extensive pediment decorated with mortar work reliefs in the Algarvean style.

CHURCH OF SÃO PEDRO (ST. PETER)

The chancel has a carved altarpiece from the end of the 17th century, belonging to the proto-Baroque period. The highly decorated altarpiece in the Chapel of the Santíssimo Sacramento (Most Holy Sacrament) is one of the most expressive works of the Baroque period, and includes a bas-relief depicting the Last Supper. The Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Vitória (Our Lady of Victory), commissioned by the confraternity of the Compromisso Marítimo is a fine example from the rococo period, and was executed by the Faro carver António Ferreira de Araújo. The Capela das Almas (Chapel of Souls) is notable for its important collection of Baroque tiles, and it also contains a rococo altarpiece, replacing the previous one which was damaged by the 1755 earthquake. A stone statue of Nossa Senhora da Esperança (Our Lady of Hope) (15th century) taken from a former chapel and a finely-modelled Santa Ana (St. Anne) attributed to the sculptor Machado de Castro (18th century) are two of the items in this church's fine collection of art works, which also includes paintings and statues from monasteries laicised in the 19th century.

CHURCH OF ORDEM TERCEIRA DO CARMO (THIRD ORDER OF CARMEL)

The sizeable Carmo church, with its imposing façade and twin bell-towers, stands out against the city skyline. The church was founded by Bishop D. António Pereira da Silva. It was built between 1713 and 1719, following the design by a Carmelite from Lisbon. In the middle of the 18th century, the main body of the church was enlarged and its façade was destroyed, with Diogo Tavares being responsible for the design of the new façade. Inside, the main features are the different chapels which are profusely decorated with gilded woodcarving, and especially the chancel, the work of the carver Manuel Martins. It is in this church that the first examples of work in the rococo style appeared in the Algarve – in the chapel of São José. The church houses an important collection of Baroque religious statuary, including nine statues of the triumphal procession which are the work of the Algarvean sculptor and carver Manuel Martins. The sacristy has a coffered ceiling decorated with painted panels. In the adjoining patio there is a picturesque but rather sinister Chapel of Bones (1816).



Carmo Church - LC

CHURCH AND MONASTERY OF THE CAPUCHOS (CAPUCHINS)

Built at the beginning of the 17th century, this building has a façade typical of Capuchin architecture, with a pediment, arcades and a statue set in a niche. The main altar and side altars are adorned with gilded carvings of great beauty from the Baroque period. There is an important collection of 18th century narrative tiles in the main chapel (episodes from the life of St. Anthony) and on the side walls (Death of St. Anthony and Descent from the Cross). There is a small, harmonious cloister.

HOUSE OF THE "COMPROMISSO MARÍTIMO"

The Compromisso Marítimo was a welfare institution for the sailors and fishermen on whom Faro's prosperity had long been founded. This building dates from the beginning of the 18th century and was constructed on the site of a house built in the Middle Ages. The main façade has a niche containing a statue of St. Pedro Gonçalves Telmo. The arches of the lateral façade used to house the old mariners' slaughterhouse. On the upper storey is the Sala de Despacho (Assembly Hall), which has a coffered ceiling decorated with oil paintings.

CUSTOMS HOUSE

Built in the 16th century, the customs house underwent major changes during the 19th century.

MADALENA CHAPEL

This is a late medieval building which underwent extensive restoration in the 19th century to serve as the private chapel of a local merchant's home.

THE NEW TOWN

Since the end of the 19th century the city has expanded beyond its defensive walls, into an area once occupied by farms and smallholdings. This was where Faro's newly wealthy middle classes chose to build their luxurious residences. The Palácio Fialho, a vast country house in the classical French style built at the beginning of the 20th century, is undoubtedly the best example of the desire of industrialists and merchants to affirm their social status in bricks and mortar. Other such homes are the Palacete Guerreirinho which, although as recent as 1936, has a façade decorated in the neo-classical style; the Vivenda Marília (1930), a delicious melange of styles not without a certain Moorish flavour; and the Casa Mateus de Silveira, from the end of the 19th century, which incorporated a town farm.

CHAPEL OF SÃO SEBASTIÃO (ST. SEBASTIAN)

This building dates from medieval times, and was once situated on the outskirts of the city. It was restored in the 17th, 18th and 20th centuries. Particularly noteworthy are the Baroque-style altarpiece in the chancel, the Manueline side chapel with a star-shaped vault, and the 17th century tiled walls.

CHURCH OF SANTO AMARO

This chapel was founded in the 15th/16th centuries by João Amado, a knight and valet to the Bishop D. João Camelo Madureira. In the 17th century it became located inside the new city wall, whose remains can still be seen next to the chapel.

In the 18th century, it was rebuilt by the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Carmo which was temporarily based here. Its cupola and bell-tower are decorated with rococo ornamentation. At one time there was a lepers' hospital attached to it.

CHAPEL OF SANTO ANTÓNIO DO ALTO

This chapel was probably built during the second half of the 15th century next to a medieval watchtower. In the 16th century, it underwent some changes and the lower part of the tower was used as the chancel, where a star-shaped vault from the Manueline period can be found.

Major work was carried out in the 11th century: the chancel was closed, a galilee and a sacristy were built, the nave was enlarged and a new façade was built as a result.

Of particular importance are the collection of Baroque statues and the altarpiece in the chancel, a work dating from the same artistic period, designed by Manuel Martins and made by Tomé da Costa and Francisco Xavier Guedelha.

A view over the city can be enjoyed from the medieval tower.

CHAPEL OF SÃO LUIS (ST. LOUIS)

Located in what were once the outskirts of the city, this 17th century building was extensively rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th century. There is a carved neo-classical altarpiece on the main altar, and it has an interesting cupola.

CHAPEL OF SÃO MIGUEL (ST. MICHAEL)

This was the private chapel (18th century) of a nobleman's house and has a façade of striking simplicity. It has an altarpiece in the rocaille style and statues of Nossa Senhora da Saúde (Our Lady of Health), the Archangel Michael and the Anjo da Guarda (Guardian Angel).

JEWISH CEMETERY

Established in 1820, this was the burial ground for the town's Jewish population until 1932. More than one hundred headstones bearing inscriptions in Hebrew testify to the centuries-old presence of the Jewish community in Faro.

LETHES THEATRE

A former college of the Society of Jesus (16th/18th centuries), this building has the sober façade typical of Jesuit buildings. It was turned into a theatre in 1845 and is an interesting example of a 19th/20th century provincial playhouse.



TEATRO DAS FIGURAS

Regarded as one of the emblematic works of "Faro, Capital Nacional da Cultura", the Faro Municipal Theatre, now known as the Teatro das Figuras, was built in 2005. The building was designed by the architect Gonçalo Byrne and forms part of the National Theatre Network. It has a maximum seating capacity of 800, and the building is already admired as one of the masterpieces of contemporary architecture.

HORTA DO OURIVES

Adjoining the country house, which dates from the 17th century and displays the typical "tesoura" roofs and French windows with wrought iron railings, is an octagonal chapel, built in the 18th century, which is among the most interesting examples of Baroque architecture in the Algarve. Opposite stands the Casa das Figuras, formerly a warehouse for the farm where the granary was situated, which has a mortar work parapet decorated with a variety of curious motifs: winged dragons with human faces, dolphins and, at the top, the torso of a black man.

CHURCH OF ORDEM TERCEIRA DE SÃO FRANCISCO (THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS)

Work on the original church began at the end of the 17th century. Considered too small for the congregation it attracted, it was enlarged between the middle of the 18th century and the initial decades of the 19th, at which time the façade was completed. The narrative tiles which adorn the walls of the chancel and the carved cornices are from the Baroque period. The tiles on the vault are from later in the same century; rebuilt after the earthquake of 1755, the vault has at its centre a fine polychrome panel depicting the Coronation of the Virgin. The main altar and the eight-sectioned dome over the transept are decorated with magnificent carving in the rocaille style (third quarter of the 18th century). Other parts of the church are decorated with panels of 17th and 18th century tiles. There is an interesting collection of mannequins that are intended to be dressed and used in the Cinzas (Ashes) and Dores (Pains) processions. There is a series of Italian paintings (late 18th century) depicting the life of the patron saint. The cloister is pleasantly harmonious. The faithful and any other visitors will be dazzled by the magnificent carvings, tiles and paintings dating from the 18th century; this is what is meant by a "total work of art". Next to the church is a building which used to be a monastery but which has now been turned into a Hotel and Tourism College.

MARITIME MUSEUM

This museum houses a small but interesting ethnographic collection relating to marine activities and fishing in the Algarve, including models of the different types of vessel used.

getting to know faro municipality

ESTOI

The streets and houses of this ancient village, with their whitewashed walls, ornate chimneys and small gardens full of trees and flowers, retain much of the traditional character of the Algarve.

MAIN CHURCH 33

Built in the 16th century on the site of a medieval chapel, the church was rebuilt in the 18th/19th centuries under the guidance of the Italian architect Francisco Xavier Fabri. It has a neoclassical façade culminating in a pediment, and an interesting bell-tower. The interior consists of three naves and the altars have 19th century altarpieces. There are statues from the 17th/18th centuries, most notably of São Vicente (St. Vincent) and São Diogo (St. Diego). The pulpit is made of local marble. The baptistery bears neo-rocaille decoration in a similar style to that used in Estoi palace. The church treasures include a monstrance in silver gilt and an embroidered cape (17th century).

ESTOI PALACE 31

The romantic tastes of the first owner, a scion of one of the most distinguished families of the Algarvean nobility, inspired him to build a country house surrounded by gardens in a beautiful natural setting. Rather than turning to the medieval models favoured by the revivalists of the period (first half of the 19th century), as exemplified by the Royal Penn Palace in Sintra, he opted for a style combining neo-baroque and neo-rococo elements. After several decades of neglect, the palace was bought by a wealthy pharmacist (who later became Viscount of Estoi), who continued work on it and made it his home (early 20th century).

The palace is a huge building, its exterior partially covered with tiles bearing floral decoration and depicting a variety of scenes. Inside, the decoration on the plaster ceilings - the finest in the Algarve - is worthy of mention, as are the furniture, the chapel, the hall, the reception and dining rooms, the two tea pavilions and the building which houses a nativity scene. At the entrance to the palace there is a small temple containing a waterfall and a statue of the Three Graces on a shell, a copy of the work by the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822). Statues of Venus and Diana stand in niches. The gardens are in the late romantic style, laid out on different levels, with flights of steps, lakes and marble and ceramic statues.

THE ROMAN RUINS AT MILREU 32

What had been a large farmhouse in the 1st century was turned in the 3rd century into a vast and luxurious "villa". The living quarters were arranged around the peristyle and the floor was covered in mosaics bearing a variety of designs. The "villa" had its own baths and striking mosaics decorated with marine motifs (fish, sea urchins etc.). A sanctuary built in the 4th century was made into a paleo-Christian church in the 5th. On the ruins, a house with cylindrical buttresses was built in 16th century.



Milreu - TA

SANTA BÁRBARA DE NEXE

In the vicinity, the presence of a Bronze Age hill fort, which was subsequently used by both the Phoenicians and the Romans, shows how ancient this settlement is. The village is surrounded by fields and hills covered in fruit trees.

MAIN CHURCH ³⁴

This church is medieval in origin and was remodelled in the 15th century according to Manueline and proto-renaissance precepts, and there are remains from this period in the chancel. It underwent alteration in the 18th century. The interior consists of three naves, with ogival arches. The altars have Baroque and Rococo altarpieces. There are statues from the 17th and 18th centuries and a number of religious objects, including the reliquary of Santa Bárbara (15th century). In the chapel of Santo António (St. Anthony) there are two 16th century paintings on wood. There is a dado of polychrome tiles and above the triumphal arch there is a panel depicting the coronation of Santa Bárbara by two angels (1702).

CHAPEL OF SANTA CATARINA (ST. CATHERINE)

Situated at Gorjões, this small 17th century church is late medieval in origin and has undergone a series of alterations over the centuries. There is a single nave on the inside, a revivalist altarpiece and some statues dating from the 19th century.

CONCEIÇÃO

Single-storey houses, their doors and windows picked out in bright colours and their façades topped by geometrically patterned parapets, lend Conceição the charm of a typical Algarvean village.

MAIN CHURCH ³⁰

This church is probably of medieval origin and was reconstructed in the 16th century. The doorway on the façade is from the third quarter of the 16th century. On the inside, with its single nave, some features of Manueline art can be seen in the chancel (star-shaped vault and triumphal arch), a revivalist altarpiece built after the 1755 earthquake, and a small collection of statues.

CRUZEIRO

Statue of the crucifixion mounted on a column (16th century).

BEACHES

The long strip of dunes that separates the sea from the Ria Formosa is a paradise for anyone who enjoys sun, sand and sea, with the advantage that visitors can choose from a necklace of separate islands, and have mile after mile of sandy beaches all to themselves.

Ilha de Faro

Linked to the mainland by a road, this island has a small centre with beach houses, restaurants and other tourist facilities.



Faro Beach - LC

Ilha da Barreta (Ilha Deserta)

This island is truly calm and solitary, and has ferry connections in the months of July, August and September. It is an excellent destination for anyone who has hired a boat or is lucky enough to have their own, and who wants to enjoy the pleasures of sea and sand undisturbed by other holidaymakers.



Deserta - HR

Ilha do Farol

Apart from a few fishermen's cabins, there is nothing on these islands but sand... There is regular access by ferry from Faro (in the summer) and Olhão (all year round).



Farol - HR

Ilha da Culatra

A former fishing village, until a few decades ago the houses of Culatra had wooden walls and thatched roofs. Picturesque scenes of fishermen at work can still be seen, and shellfish are harvested from the Ria. There is an extensive beach, which is quiet, with a family atmosphere. There is regular access to the island by ferry from Olhão (all year round).



THE DELIGHTS OF GOOD COOKING

All of the Algarve's best-known dishes can be sampled in Faro. But anyone who wants to try the typical fishermen's recipes should sample the local fish soup and the traditional razor clam risotto. Choosing from among the many local cakes and desserts is a hard task because they all make extensive use of the tasty local figs and almonds. The best way to round off a meal is a glass of fig brandy or "medronho", a spirit made with the fruit of the strawberry tree.



POPULAR CRAFTS

Faro is an ideal place to explore the colourful world of Algarvean crafts. Tiles decorated with traditional motifs are produced locally. Further inland, in Santa Bárbara de Nexe and Estoi, the womenfolk still weave and plait palm leaves to make baskets, hats and mats.



faro



Data sheet

Edition and Copyright: Região de Turismo do Algarve

Cartography: IGeoE

Translation: Inpokulis

Printing: Gráfica Comercial

Photography: Hélio Ramos (HR), Luís da Cruz (LC), Miguel Veterano (MV), Vasco Célio (VC)

www.visitalgarve.pt

