

Ribatejo
Share the passion

Culture

**Discover
the Ribatejo.**

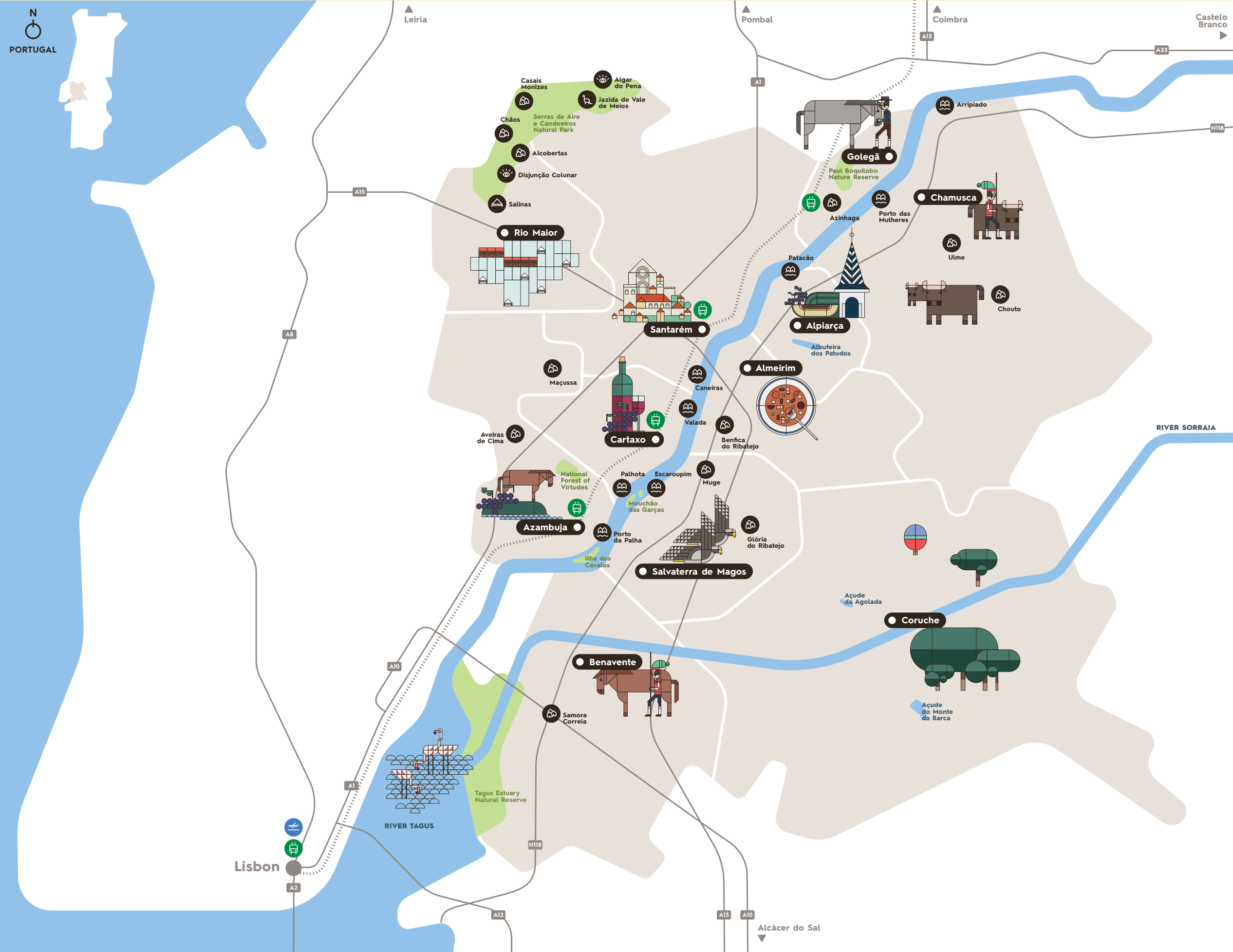


Getting there:

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various routes and options
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Guide & map of Ribatejo

Culture



The Cultural Heritage

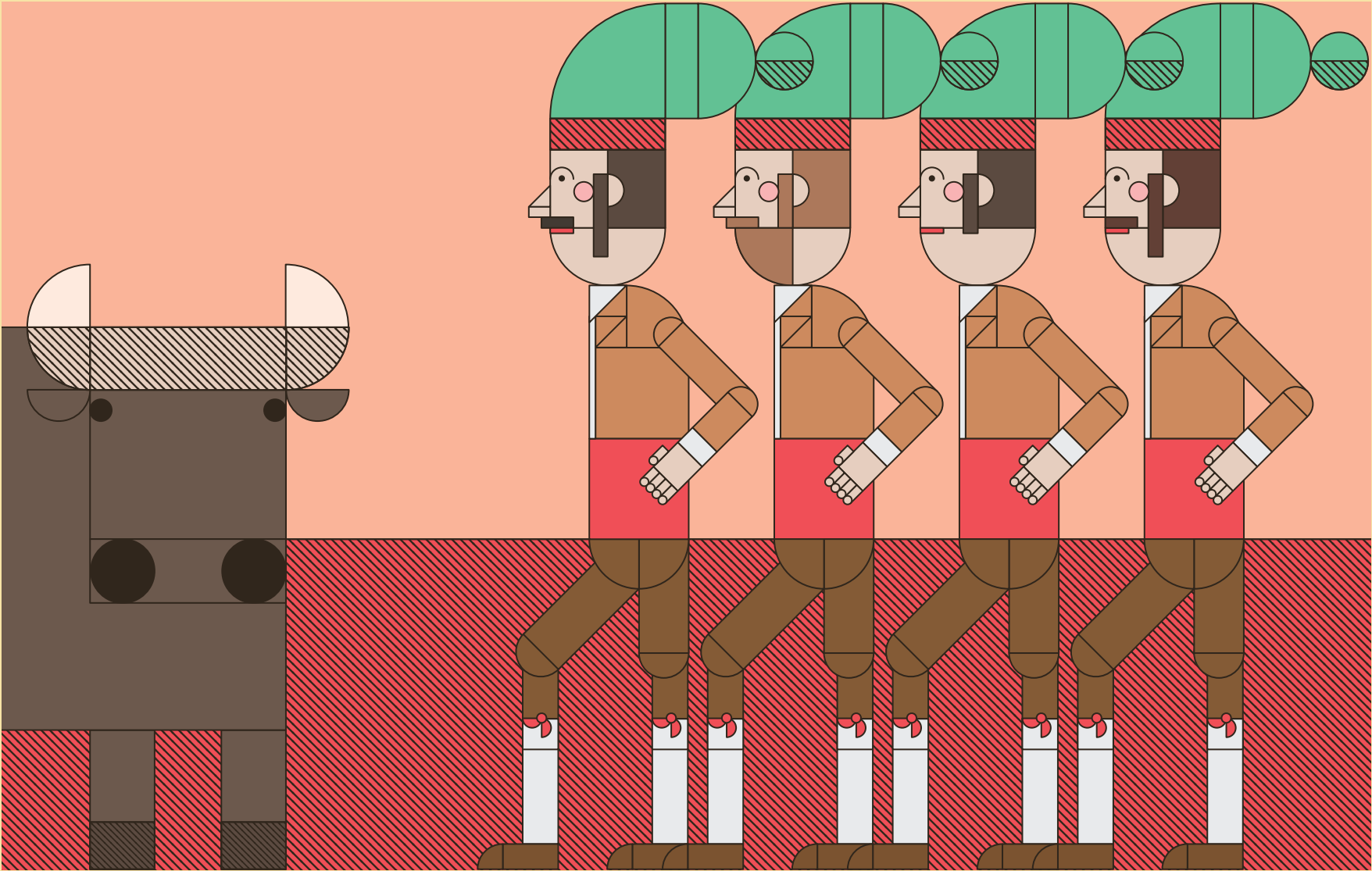
Discovering the traditions and the history

With neither a coastline nor a border with Spain, the Ribatejo has always stood alone with its own traditions and proud heritage. The Tagus river has long shaped the region, sometimes an unpredictable ally but always ensuring richly fertile countryside producing abundant fresh produce.

The wine and gastronomy is delectable with artisan craftsmen, cheese makers and bakers; traditional wine makers work alongside gleaming, state of the art wineries. The history is endlessly fascinating with Neolithic and Roman influences and a Moorish legacy, while the ancient towns and villages and their elegant churches, palaces, fountains and squares are a delight.

The Ribatejans never miss a chance to celebrate with an infinite variety of festivals. The icons of the landscape, the elegant thoroughbred Lusitano horses, the statuesque black bulls and the *campino* herdsmen, dressed in red and green, lead the festivities with their music and fandango dancing.

There is great pride and real passion in their heritage – come and experience it for yourself.



Municipalities

Alpiarça

A charming area where you can enjoy excellent gastronomy, fascinating history and innovative architecture at the Casa dos Patudos, where some of Portugal’s nest art works are displayed.

Visit the reserve to learn about the Sorraia horse, descended from the early wild horses.

Benavente

Benavente borders the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve, which spans 50 square miles and is part of Portugal’s largest wetland area and one of Europe’s most important.

A huge variety of wildlife and migrating birds put on quite a show! The famous Carolino rice is cultivated here as well as some of the region’s finest wines.

Chamusca

Set on the edge of the fertile flood plain of the Tagus, this is the agricultural heartland. Here the iconic horses and bulls are revered and tradition and faith go hand in hand, while the people are always ready for a celebration.

The beautiful village of Arripiado, just upriver, is one of the region’s gems.

Golegã

The passion for horses runs deep here. Held since the 18th century, the Horse Fair is the highlight of the year, showcasing some of Portugal’s finest thoroughbred horses. It’s a spectacle not to be missed.

Away from the livestock, the rows of vines and the riverside marshes, is the Casa-Estúdio of Carlos Relvas, a polymath and pioneering 19th century photographer.

Salvaterra de Magos

The former Royal Palace in Salvaterra de Magos today still houses the Falcoaria Real (Royal Falconry). Recognised on the UNESCO register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the interaction between man and bird is impressive.

Elsewhere exquisite embroideries and the Muge pottery workshops dating from Roman times are on show.

Almeirim

Lying on the fertile plains not far from Santarém, the Almeirim landscape is dominated by magnificent horses, black bulls and endless rows of vines. Superb wine and fresh, local produce is plentiful, giving rise to a vibrant gastronomic tradition.

The famous *sopa da pedra* (stone soup) is a signature dish with a great back story – be sure to try it.

Azambuja

A rural area, where the *campino*, the traditional mounted herdsman, holds sway.

To get to know the area better, taste the distinctive goats’ cheese and the artisan breads, walk through the vineyards and learn about the local wine at the innovative wine museum in Aveiras de Cima, or take a kayak trip along the Vala Real or Royal Canal – look out for the colourful wildlife along the water’s edge!

Cartaxo

Surrounded by vineyards, this is real wine country. Several renowned *quintas* are based here, some dating back to the 18th century.

Down by the water you’ll find the colourful wooden houses of the Avieiros fishing communities – traditionally painted and raised up on stilts.

Coruche

The cork capital of the world, 5 million corks are produced here daily and you’ll learn a lot more about this most sustainable of products at the eye-catching Cork Observatory. The Sorraia river nourishes some of Portugal’s finest crops.

For the best views of this picturesque district, take to the skies in a hot air balloon.

Rio Maior

The salt pans at Fonte de Bica are unique, quietly producing salt since 1177. Also unique is the Dólmen de Alcobertas, dating back 4,000 years: a pagan burial site now annexed by a Christian church to create a side chapel.

On a larger scale, the Serras de Aire and Candeeiros Natural Park is an enduring magnet for walkers and cyclists. It’s all about the rock.

Santarém

With Roman and Moorish influences, Ribatejo’s largest city had a long history well before Portugal was a fully formed nation.

This is the gateway to the Ribatejo with its narrow streets, elegant squares, Gothic architecture and unsurpassed views from the Portas do Sol.



1. Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Graça
Santarém

Set in the old quarter of Santarém, this church was completed in the early 15th century as a convent in the Augustine tradition.

Famous for its Gothic façade with intricate portico and dainty rosette, it bears witness to the impact and influence of the Gothic style on the Ribatejo. Notably, it also houses the tomb of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the discoverer of Brazil.

2. Igreja de Santa Clara
Santarém

Dating from 1259, this is the largest Gothic cathedral in Santarém and was built by King Afonso III.

Remodelled in the early 17th century, the shape was altered but the most distinctive architectural feature remains the stunning Gothic rose window that illuminates the austere but elegant interior.

3. Fonte das Figueiras
Santarém

The Fountain of the Fig Trees is de nitely somewhere to pause a moment and rest — as travellers have done for several centuries before entering the city.

One of the rare examples of Gothic civil architecture in Portugal, it was constructed in the 14th century in the form of a stone canopy, three arches and with water spouting from the city wall. A welcome respite for thirsty, dusty travellers.



Cathedral of Santarém and Museu Diocesano
Santarém

Dating from 1711, this is Portugal’s newest cathedral. Originally a Jesuit church and seminary, its imposing structure is unmistakable.

The collection of religious art in the museum is magnificent, with works from the 13th century through to the present day all adding elements to the jigsaw that is the story of Santarém’s evolution.

The Glorious Heritage

Exquisite art and cultural legacy

For as long as the Tagus river has flowed through Ribatejo, di erent peoples have settled there, leaving a legacy that remains visible to this day.

Neolithic settlers rst arrived, followed by others who were drawn by the fertile plains. Jews, Muslims and Christians all played a role, with the Santarém synagogue being the oldest in Portugal. The Muslims created the dykes and engineering works, improving the land and introducing Arab words into the Portuguese language as they did so.

The medieval period saw the Ribatejo become a popular haunt for kings and courtiers who founded churches, convents and chapels and enjoyed falconry and hunting.

The Gothic influence is widespread through the region and the ornate Manueline tradition left a uniquely dramatic legacy, particularly when seen alongside the beautiful ceramic tiles decorating the interiors of churches and monuments. The religious art, often still adorning the walls of churches, both grand and humble, throughout the region, is stunning.

The Ribatejo has a rich, proud and colourful history — get to know its fascinating heritage for yourself.



Anta de Alcobertas
Rio Maior

Here in Alcobertas an ancient megalith, 4,000 years old, was once a place of pagan worship but today is part of a Christian church. It was annexed in the 15th century to create a side chapel accessed through the church wall and a short corridor of massive granite slabs.

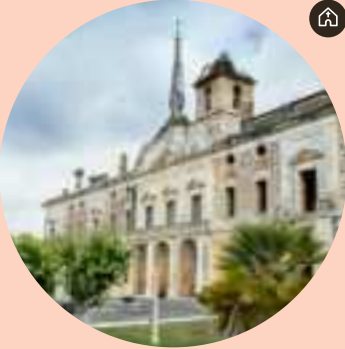
June sees a lively festival, celebrating the area’s Roman heritage — the **Mercadinho Romano** de Rio Maior.



Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Castelo
Coruche

This attractive church, with its white walls and distinctive blue detail and tower surmounted with a large cross, was constructed after the Christian reconquest by King Afonso Henriques in the late 12th century.

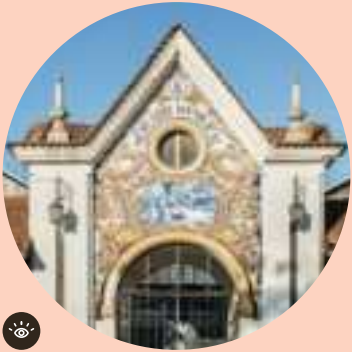
The king’s portrait still hangs inside. In August a festival takes place, in honour of the Nossa Senhora or ‘Lady of the Castle’, with fireworks and a procession accompanied by music.



Church of the Palácio de Manique do Intendente
Azambuja

The 18th century palace was an ambitious project with a vast monumental façade and a chapel at its centre.

The Chief of Police, Pina Manique, had a grand vision and worked with leading architects of the day to combine baroque and Neoclassical styles. But it was never completed due to his removal from office and untimely death in 1805.



Municipal Market
Santarém

During the Middle Ages, Santarém was the royal seat for the king and court. The earliest parliament, the *Cortes*, sat here and the wealth of cultural heritage is astonishing.

Dating back to 1928 (before then the market was in the open air), the market is decorated with over 60 large ceramic tiles depicting rural scenes. Step inside for a barrage of colour, a huge array of produce and a real sense of bustle.

Urbi Scallabis Interpretation Centre
Santarém

The city’s gardens, the **Jardim das Portas do Sol**, offer spectacular views out over the mighty Tagus river to the plains beyond. They also provide the opportunity to learn about the area’s past

Head to the *Urbi Scallabis*, an excellent interpretive centre, and discover the historical narrative that brings to life this fascinating region.



Casa-Estúdio Carlos Relvas
Golegã

Carlos Relvas was a farmer, politician, inventor, sportsman, amateur bullfighter and even a musician. He was, above all, a great pioneering photographer and his studio-house, built from scratch, is a unique building well ahead of its time. Constructed with ingenious enhancements to facilitate his photographic studies, it has a complex system of glazing and curtains operated by ropes and pulleys which cover the upper floor of the house in order to control light during the process of photographic development.

Structurally, the house is romantic in style, with ornate details to the exterior. Inside is housed the Carlos Relvas archive, including portraits showing all walks of life in late nineteenth century Portugal, as well as buildings, landscapes and even animals. It is a revealing window into the everyday life of the time.



Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Assunção de Marvila
Santarém

Rebuilt in the 16th century by King Manuel I, this church is a beautiful example of the Manueline style of Gothic architecture.

Decorative tiles dating from 1617 to 1639 are a highlight, along with the splendid pipe organ renovated in 2008.



Ermida de Nossa Senhora do Pranto
Chamusca

Behind a simple façade lies an ornate interior adorned with 17th and 18th century decorative tiles. Legend has it that the townsfolk sheltered here during the French invasion, having burned the invaders’ boats.

The French troops were prevented from crossing the river and bombarded the town in retaliation - a cannonball fired by the French is still on display here.



Igreja Matriz de Samora Correia
Benavente

A striking church with twin towers rising into the blue Ribatejan sky, it was constructed on the site of an early medieval church. Inaugurated in 1721, it is dedicated to Nossa Senhora da Oliveira, the patron saint of the parish.

The church dominates the elegant square and its interior is traditionally tiled with two large 18th century panels dedicated to S. Tiago.



Casa dos Patudos
Alpiarça

This distinctively styled building was constructed by José Relvas, the son of the photographer Carlos Relvas, as both a residence and to house his extensive art collection. José Relvas was a farmer, musician, diplomat, politician and statesman and it was he who proclaimed the Republic on 5 October 1910.

In 1960 the house was opened to the public as a museum and today exhibits some of Portugal’s most important works, including those by Silva Porto, José Malhoa, Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro, Soares dos Reis and Mercié.

The building itself was designed by the innovative Raul Lino, whose flair and ideas matched Relvas’s vision. As a result, the Casa dos Patudos marked the arrival of a new architectural language and, ultimately, became one of Portugal’s leading art establishments.



Igreja Matriz
Chamusca

The oldest church in Chamusca and built in honour of São Brás, the village’s patron saint, it was constructed in ornate Manueline style in the mid-16th century.

May sees the village busy with visitors flocking here to celebrate **Ascension**, and numerous activities centred around the church.



In the Writers’ Footsteps
Golegã

A number of great writers are associated with the Ribatejo. Azinhaga is the birthplace of José Saramago, the Nobel Prize-winning author, and there is a statue of him there. Follow the footsteps of the 17th century Almeida Garrett, author of the ground breaking 1849 *Viagens na Minha Terra* (trips in my land), or discover the landscapes of Alves Redol. Visit Quinta Vale de Lobos, home of Alexandre Herculano and the village of São João da Ribeira where the poet Ruy Belo lived.



Falcoaria Real
Salvaterra de Magos

The noble art of falconry is recognised on UNESCO’s register of Intangible Cultural Heritage. One of the world’s oldest relationships between man and bird, falconry is performed daily at the Falcoaria Real at Salvaterra de Magos, where the stunning 18th century architecture is as dramatic as the interaction with the birds of prey.

Some of the species of birds at the Falcoaria Real have flown the skies above Ribatejo since the Middle Ages and the spectacle is no less arresting than it was then.

A visit to the Falcoaria will include a chance to watch demonstrations of falcons and you will see for yourself the remarkable bond between man and bird.





Cruzeiro Religioso e Cultural do Tejo, Nossa Senhora dos Avieiros e do Tejo
Tagus river

This is a special procession along the Tagus river, with traditional river boats colourfully decked out in celebratory adornments and carrying a statue of Our Lady of *Avieiros* and the Tagus on a water borne pilgrimage.

The lively flotilla of jaunty boats passes riverside communities along the way and runs from May to June in twelve stages.

The procession is made in honour of the patron saints of the coastal fishermen and honours their age-old customs.

Aside from the river processions, other events and spectacles take place, mostly involving traditional music, dancing, food and wine.

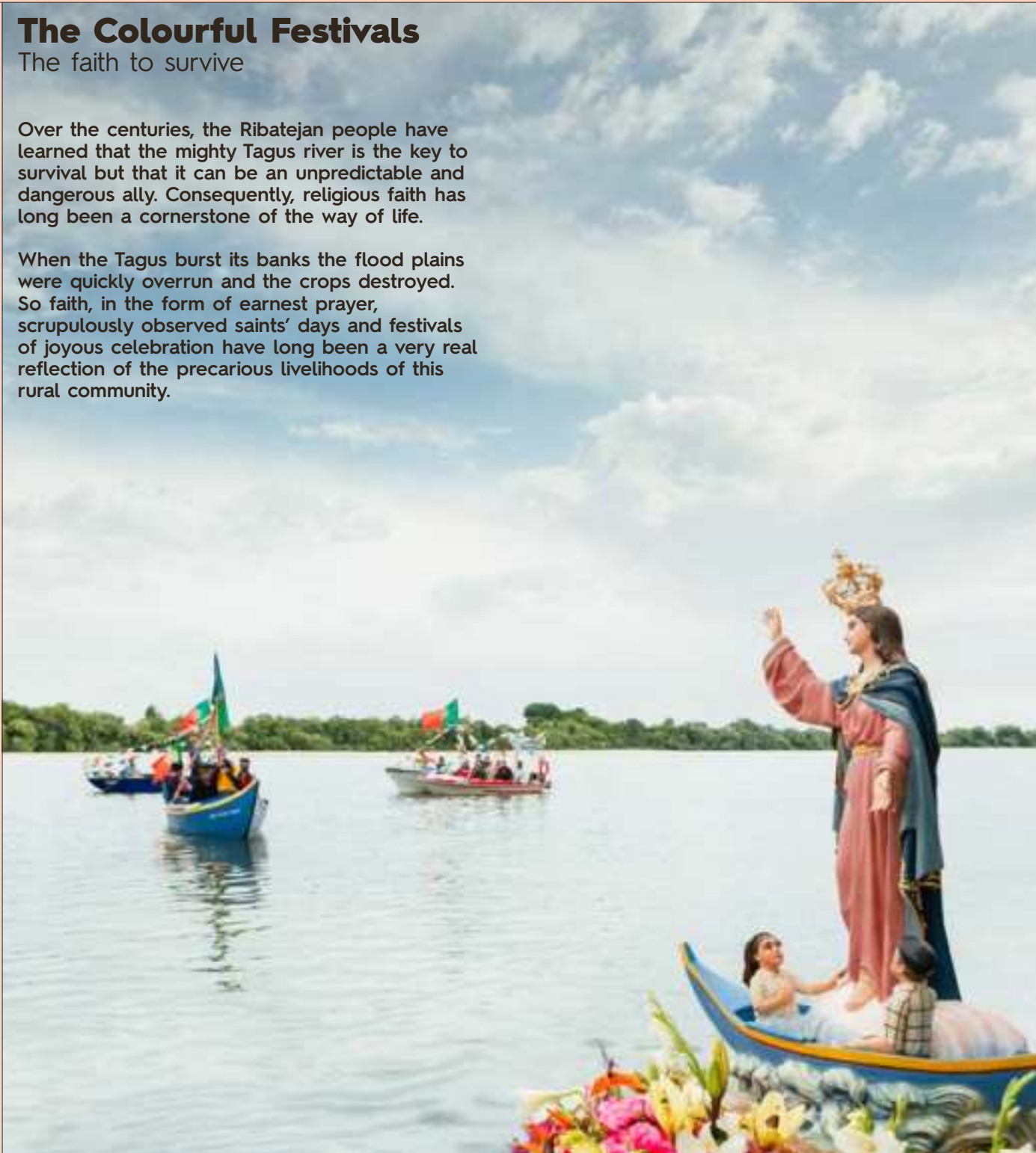
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The Colourful Festivals

The faith to survive

Over the centuries, the Ribatejan people have learned that the mighty Tagus river is the key to survival but that it can be an unpredictable and dangerous ally. Consequently, religious faith has long been a cornerstone of the way of life.

When the Tagus burst its banks the flood plains were quickly overrun and the crops destroyed. So faith, in the form of earnest prayer, scrupulously observed saints’ days and festivals of joyous celebration have long been a very real reflection of the precarious livelihoods of this rural community.



Fandango and Folklore

‘Dance is a fight A frantic duel in which two competitors are measured, at first wary, then more relaxed and confident’. So wrote the poet Barreiros when describing the fandango.

The Ribatejo Fandango is a lively dance, usually performed by *campinos* or herders, often in their traditional red and green hats and tunics. After a day in the saddle, time to remove the spurs and indulge in a little semi-competitive toe tapping dancing to the sound of the concertina.

In September the **Celestino Graça International Folklore Festival** is an unmissable event that brings together traditional dance groups from around the world in Santarém.



The Romeiros

Golegã, the horse capital of the Ribatejo, sees the *romeiros* (pilgrims) de São Martinho making their pilgrimage every year, part of the national horse fair. The most distinctive element of the pilgrims’ dress is the Cross of St. Martin — made up of five ears of wheat — and they also sport a bright red cloak worn over one shoulder.

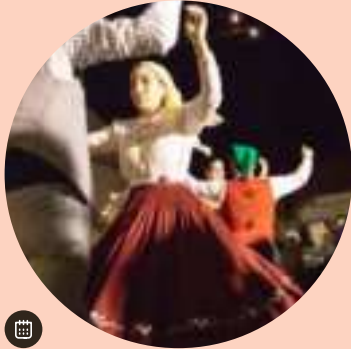


Expoégua e Romaria a São Martinho

Golegã

Held in May, this is an annual event for horse lovers, a fair that salutes the mares and their foals, particularly the Pure Blood Lusitano breed.

Viewed as a build up to the national horse fair in November, it features a procession past the various churches of the town, with immaculately dressed pilgrims sporting their red cloaks.



Festa de Todos os Santos

Cartaxo

On the 1st November the city of Cartaxo holds the All Saints’ Fair, one of the oldest and most traditional fairs in the country, dating back to the 17th century.

Seasonal produce, local handicrafts, ancient heritage and wonderful wines are celebrated and the lively entertainment ensures a carnival atmosphere.



Festa do Cavalo e Feira de São Martinho

Golegã

The Golegã Horse Fair has been held since the 18th century. The most illustrious of its kind in Portugal, it attracts the best breeders and the finest examples of the Pure Blood Lusitano horse.

During the festival of St. Martin there is a range of equestrian events, including championships and carriage riding competitions — as well as some more light hearted fun and games.

Festas de Nossa Senhora de Oliveira e de Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe

Benavente

These festivals, of Our Lady of Oliveira and Our Lady of Guadalupe, involve a procession in honour of the saints.

It’s a colourful celebration, with the *campinos*, or herdsmen, dressed in their traditional garb and carrying images of the saints.

Festas da Ascensão

Chamusca

One of the biggest days in the religious calendar, the Chamusca Ascension Day celebrations are also one of the most famous of the feast days. It’s May, so the fields are turning golden and the wild flowers are in bloom and the countryside looks magnificent. Celebrations include musical events, wonderful gastronomy and local produce and there are plenty of crafts on display. The iconic herdsmen, the *campinos*, with their bulls and horses are centre stage.



Núcleo Tauromáquico

Coruche

In Coruche the main museum in the centre of town has a special exhibition tracing and celebrating the story of the bull in the region.

The collection of artifacts, together with posters, photographs, books and correspondence provides a fascinating background to this almost mythical animal.



Festas do Foral, dos Toiros e do Fandango

Salvaterra de Magos

During June the town of Salvaterra de Magos holds traditional festivals celebrating rural traditions and the heritage of the fandango.

Vibrant concerts, grilled sardines, intricate craftwork, unique dancing folklore and, of course, Ribatejo wine are all on the menu.

Festa da Amizade e da Sardinha Assada

Benavente

What began as a gathering of a group of friends soon became one of the most popular events in Benavente.

Thousands come to watch the parade of *campinos* and riders, and to participate in the games and competitions that take place. Typically they also devour 5,000 kg of grilled sardines, 10,000 loaves and 5,000 litres of wine during the festival. Come along - you won't go hungry.

Feira de Maio

Azambuja

Over the last weekend of May, the May Fair in Azambuja runs over five days.

Its origins are in celebrating the *campino*, or herder, and many of them pack the streets riding on horseback, driving their bulls and ensuring a vibrant, colourful spectacle for all. Of course, wonderful music and superb gastronomy are part of the occasion too.



Equestrian Pursuits

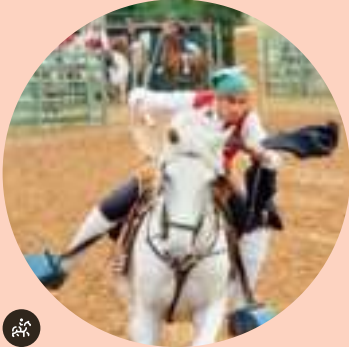
This is a wonderful place for anyone interested in trying riding for the first time, with many stables to choose from. And for those with some experience, however limited, nothing compares to riding a majestic Pure Blood Lusitano for the first time.



Equestrian Displays

The Portuguese equestrian tradition is one of the finest in the world, and in Ribatejo there is no shortage of events to prove the skill of riders and horses, with demonstrations of dressage, working horses, show jumping and more.

One of the highlights of the equestrian calendar is the renowned **Golegã Horse Fair**.



The Trials of the *Campino*

Various tests and challenges have been designed to prove the competence of *campinos* of all ages and experience.

There are obstacle courses, in which the rider must perform certain tasks with his lance while riding with his traditional jacket slung over his shoulder. The speed at which he can complete these tasks determines the *campino's* skill.

The *Campino*

The traditional cattle herdsman, or *campino*, is a hugely symbolic figure in the Ribatejo. Sitting tall and proud in the saddle, he is as much the guardian of the rural traditions as he is the custodian of the cattle and the majestic bulls.

The *campino* wears the distinctive floppy hat, green and with a red band around the brow. He sports a white starched shirt, with bright red waistcoat, dark breeches, high white gaiters and black boots. In formal situations he carries his traditional lance and has a jacket over the shoulder.

Go along to witness the *Campino Day* for a first-hand experience, held in Cartaxo on 1st May or the last Sunday in May in Azambuja.

The *Barrete*

The traditional cattle herdsman's hat is the *barrete*, typically made of wool, green and red in colour, elongated and flopping over to the back of the head and topped with a tassel.

It is generally black or grey for day to day work, the iconic red and green being traditionally reserved for feast days and special occasions. The hat is very much a symbol of the region and part of the Ribatejo identity.

Feira Nacional de Agricultura

Santarém

Held annually in Santarém, this is one of the oldest agricultural fairs in the country. It's a huge showcase for all the latest innovations in the farming world, as well a chance to celebrate the Ribatejan rural traditions.

There's plenty of serious business of course, but also the best of the rural gastronomy, equestrian displays and music.



The Talismanic *Campino*

Celebrating life and cherishing tradition

The *campino*, or traditional mounted herdsman, is the talismanic figure who dominates rural Ribatejo. He is the rugged custodian of the countryside and its customs and he is revered by the people who have carved out their livelihoods from this epic landscape. Today's visitors can immerse themselves in a bucolic paradise; peaceful, rolling countryside, unspoilt and uncommercialised. But once it was a day to day struggle to survive, and the *campino* was at the forefront of taming this landscape.

Water has always been the great life giver, but it can also be the great destroyer. This knife edge of survival has taught the Ribatejan people to celebrate life and cherish tradition. This is their land, and they are incredibly proud of it, but there is always an extra seat at the table.

Come and experience the fandango, admire the *campino* and his hardy life, and take your seat.



Open pastures

The vast landscape, indeed the whole agricultural tradition, is dominated by the horse, the bull and the cow. All play a key role, helping to create livelihoods and keeping the ancient rituals alive. The cattle graze on the lush pastures, always under the watchful eye of the *campino*, mounted on his trusty horse.

The horse is revered as much as the bull. There are many riding stables and celebrated studs, not least the Companhia das Lezírias in Benavente.



Here would-be *campinos* of all levels can try their hand!

Around Golegã, the horse capital of the Ribatejo, is the **Horse Route** or **Rota do Cavalo** which winds through 62 km of stunning landscape steeped in equestrian heritage.

The Fascinating Avieira Culture

Celebrating the ‘nomads of the river’

During the 19th century the *Avieiros*, migrants from up-river, began to move down the Tagus. Earning the soubriquet ‘nomads of the river’, they spent summer months fishing for sardines in Vieira de Leiria and then moved to the more sheltered waters of the Tagus during winter.

They increased in number during the 20th century, settling in villages along the river bank and constructing houses in their own unique style and gradually carving out a life and livelihood that eventually formed their identity.

Some of the villages are preserved to this day and can be visited. For a taste of immigrant life of over a century ago visit the villages of Caneiras, Santarém, Palhota and Valada do Ribatejo in the Cartaxo area, and Escaroupim in Salvaterra de Magos.



Boat Trips on the Tagus

A popular activity on a warm, sunny day: step aboard a traditional river boat (a *varino*) with a knowledgeable guide for a unique perspective on the surrounding wetland landscape.

The *mouchões*, or small river islands, of the Tagus are often used as pasture for horses that can be seen along the way. A trip along the **Mouchões Route**, in Azambuja, is one of the most popular.

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Glória Embroidery

Salvaterra de Magos

The cross stitch embroidery from Glória do Ribatejo is an art handed down from generation to generation. Delicately stitched garments were laboriously crafted and treasured as family heirlooms. The embroidery also decorated houses and marked special occasions like births and marriages.

In the museum of Glória do Ribatejo there are exquisite examples of the most beautiful Glória embroidery and even a reproduction of a typical village dwelling.



Artisan Shoe Makers

Almeirim

There are still craftsmen who make the traditional Ribatejan boots in the tried and tested way, using calf hide for comfort, suppleness and longevity.

These made to measure creations come in various styles: formal and casual for everyday wear, tough footwear for work and elegant riding boots.



Bullrush Baskets

Santarém

The *burnho* is a type of bullrush that grows in the grasslands and is ideal for weaving.

Used for rugged baskets and furniture, it is a traditional Ribatejan craft and is highlighted in the **Rural and Ethnographic Museum of S. João da Ribeira**, in Rio Maior.



The Avieira Village of Caneiras

Santarém

First settled by the ‘nomads of the river’ over a century ago, and despite a destructive flood in 1941, this riverside village is still inhabited by *Avieiros* fishermen and farmers. Visitors can still see the unique palafitte houses, wooden dwellings on stilts raised above the waters of the Tagus.

It’s also a fantastic spot for keen bird watchers.



The Avieira Villages of Palhota and Valada do Ribatejo

Cartaxo

Palhota is a typical fishing village, complete with colourful river boats and its palafitte buildings hoisted above the Tagus river. The pedestrian **Tapada Route** is a great way to enjoy a nature walk while learning more about the way of life of the hardy *Avieiros*. The route also passes through the fascinating village of Valada do Ribatejo, with its own history and riverside fauna and flora.



Escaroupim Fishing Village

Salvaterra de Magos

One of the fishing villages settled by the migrant fishermen from Praia da Vieira, this is a particularly fine example, founded in the 1930s.

Traditional wooden houses remain, simply constructed and painted jaunty colours, they are distinctively raised up on stilts to protect against rising flood waters. Learn how these people – the ‘nomads of the Tagus’ – lived at the **Núcleo Museológico da Casa Avieira**.



Museu Escaroupim e o Rio

Salvaterra de Magos

Opened in 2017, the Escaroupim museum of local life is a tribute to the riverside communities of the Tagus, and celebrates the traditions and memories of the *Avieiros*.

The exhibition explains the importance of the Tagus river to the Ribatejo region, provides context for socio-economic activities and brings to life the human stories behind this great migration that shaped the riverside forever.



Fishing for All

Ribatejo offers fantastic fishing. The shad is a popular fish, especially among keen anglers, seen in the rivers from February to July when it heads out to sea.

The lamprey is commercially fished during a season that runs from January to April and it was long a staple of the *Avieiros* diet, caught from their little boats, and is still a classic Portuguese dish.

The Boats of the Avieiros

These traditional boats were simple and designed for fishing in the Tagus. Typically used by husband and wife teams, she rowed while he threw the nets and gathered in the catch.



Muge Pottery

Salvaterra de Magos

The pottery workshops of Muge date back to Roman times. The process is almost unchanged with the craftsmen patiently kneading and working the clay, allowing it to dry before firing in a wood-fired oven. The painted and glazed items are particularly prized.

Pandulhos

Also produced here are *pandulhos*, small clay fittings secured to the ends of fishing nets to keep them extended.



Cork

Coruche

One of the most sustainable materials in the world, cork is the bark of the cork oak. This natural raw material offers a wealth of indispensable qualities, so learn about this fabulous natural product and its properties at the **Observatório do Sobreiro e da Cortiça**.

The **Feira Internacional da Cortiça** showcases the latest innovations made in this unique material.

The Tempting Gastronomy

Authentic cuisine and real traditions

The freshest of bread dipped in the finest golden olive oil. The creamy Carolino rice, the delicate fish and the succulent steaks. In the Ribatejo, less is more; simple, authentic quality is everything.

Try the speciality cheeses and finish with a slice of ripe melon, fresh from the field. World class gastronomy does not come any simpler.

The National Gastronomy Festival, in Santarém, is an important national gastronomic event and attracts a dizzying array of culinary wonders from across the region.



Torricado

The *torricado* is one of the most traditional dishes of the Ribatejo, stemming originally from the need for a simple, practical lunch for the *campinos* in the fields. A thick slice of bread is chargrilled, then brushed with olive oil, garlic and salt. Often accompanying cod or sardines, it is a delicacy so revered that in Samora Correia there is even a Confraria do Torricado (Brotherhood of the Torricado).

Magusto with roasted cod

Originating from Santarém, this dish took advantage of left over greens and bread, combining them with potatoes and olive and garlic to create a tasty, hearty dish, roasted in the embers with cod.



ΨΨ

Arroz Doce

One of many irresistible Portuguese sweet treats, this rice pudding is a true classic. It really should use short grain *Carolino* rice for extra creaminess, with lemon or orange peel to add a little sharpness and cut the sweetness.

A cinnamon dusting is the traditional garnish.



ΨΨ

Barretes

The *barretes* are the sweet pastry speciality of Salvaterra de Magos, created by the famous 'Parodiantes de Lisboa', the brothers José and Rui Andrade who had a popular radio show for many years.

It is an orange, almond, egg and sugar cake, and is a house speciality at the Cabana dos Parodiantes in Salvaterra.



ΨΨ

Pampilhos

Originating from Santarém, these sweet delicacies were inspired by the *pampilhos*, the long lances used by *campinos* in the fields to guide the cattle.

These pastries are a thin sponge cake carefully rolled up and filled with a sumptuous egg, sugar and cinnamon cream.



ΨΨ

Quadrinhos de Alpiarça

Another classic confection for those with a sweet tooth, these pastries involve generous quantities of sugar — now is not the time to worry about your waistline!

Eggs and lemon make these square pastries irresistible with a morning coffee while watching the world go by from a café.



ΨΨ

Sopa da Pedra (Stone Soup)

An ancient folk story tells how a hungry friar in Almeirim performed 'miracles' by adding a stone to his boiling pan and then asking curious villagers to add extra ingredients to adjust the seasoning; a little sausage, some potato, some cabbage.

The result was a hearty soup and a lesson in sharing. The friar is immortalised in a statue in Almeirim, along with his cauldron.



ΨΨ

Lapardana or Miga Fervida

Lapardana is a traditional dish from the Bairro district in Azambuja. In the past it was a belly-filling meal, often eaten before a hard day's work in the fields. Today it is normally an accompaniment to baked cod, or perhaps sardines.

Simplicity itself, it is based on bread, with cabbage, beans and olive oil, cooked in an earthenware pot in the embers.



ΨΨ

Carne à Pinéu

A typical dish from Chamusca, demonstrating originality, frugality and an opportunistic approach.

The dish originated during the making of the spicy chorizo sausage, when some of the meat, seasoned with garlic and chilli paste, was set aside and fried, then served with chips.



ΨΨ

Eels

One of the staples of Ribatejan cuisine, eels were a mainstay dish, fried, stewed and roasted, or made into a rich soup. The eel season is April-May when they are caught swimming up the Tagus.

The eel also features in other dishes like kebabs or fried eels with beans and rice and can be sampled during special festivals in Salvaterra de Magos and Benfica do Ribatejo.



ΨΨ

Manja

This is a typical dish from Azambuja. Simple and filling, it is usually served as an accompaniment to meat or fish dishes, usually roasted cod.



ΨΨ

Caralhotas de Almeirim

As with many things in Ribatejo, this is an example of prudence and inventiveness. The small scraps of bread dough clinging to the sides of the bowls are shaped into round balls and baked in a wood oven. Flour, water, salt and yeast never tasted, or smelled, so good.

In Almeirim this evolved into a baked roll or bap with its own local identity and in fact, protected status is now being sought in Brussels.



The Flavours of Ribatejo

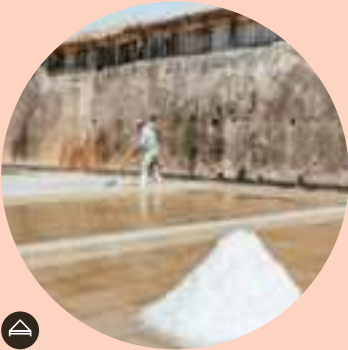
Whether you are a serious foodie, a wine enthusiast or simply a lover of good food and wine, the *Guide to Lezíria do Tejo Certified Restaurants* and the *Tejo Wine Tourism Guide* are a great place to start your gastronomic journey.

Participate in the olive harvest and watch the rumbling mills extract the precious oils; learn how rice is grown in the flooded fields, then harvested and dried; watch artisan cheese makers and bakers at their craft. See first hand how the famous, and not so famous, Ribatejo produce is created.

You'll also get to know the fabulous Ribatejo wines — one of Portugal's most important wine regions. Taste the juicy, rich reds and aromatic, fresh whites. Discover the local grape varieties, see how the wines are created and perhaps even tread some grapes yourself!

A couple of events to watch out for are the Cartaxo Wine Festival and the Wine and Cellar Festival in Aveiras de Cima, Azambuja. Foodie heaven!

Pick up a copy of the two guides from a tourist office or download eBook editions at: visitribatejo.pt



Salt Mines

Rio Maior

At the foot of the Serra dos Candeeiros, far from the salt water of the coast, the Salinas da Fonte da Bica have been quietly producing salt since 1177. This is a salt mine, where fresh water passes through a subterranean layer of rock salt and transforms into salt water seven times more salty than the sea.

The traditional wooden huts where salt was stored are well preserved, down to the inventive wooden latches that are resistant to the corrosive effects of salt.



The Sensational Wine

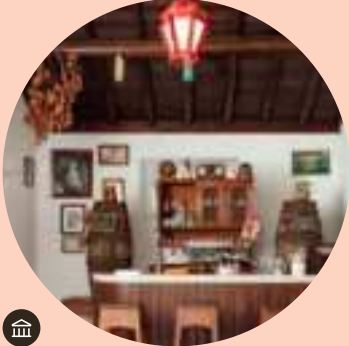
Unique varieties and unforgettable aromas

Wine has been made in this region since 2,000 BC, before Portugal was even a country. Viticulture has always been a natural activity here, due to the climate and the soils, both perfect for growing grapes. For centuries wine was a major export from the Tagus region, and was on board the pioneering ships at the time of the discoveries in the New World.

For many years the aim was volume production, encouraged by demand and the wonderful *terroir*. But gradually wine producers looked to produce smaller quantities of fine wines of real quality; wines of distinction and regional character.

Today, the Ribatejo wine is Denomination of Controlled Origin (DOC), protected and with a clear focus on excellence. Increasingly familiar with *connoisseurs* and sought out by enthusiasts, there's a full range of wines from crisp, fruity white wines with tropical fruit notes, to rich, robust reds, aromatic and perfect with roast meats of the region.

Follow the Rota de Vinhos do Tejo and get the full story.



Museu Rural e do Vinho

Cartaxo

About 10 km from Santarém, in Cartaxo village is a fascinating museum of rural life and wine production. It brings to life the agricultural history of the area and its tradition of producing full bodied red wines. Visitors are shown the wine making process, from planting of the vines, through cultivation and harvesting to pressing in a restored old cellar. There's even a traditional tavern to add an authentic touch of rural life and allow you to sample some local gastronomic fare.



The Grape Harvest

The grape harvest is one of the most special times in the Ribatejo. It's the culmination of a year's hard work, through all the challenges and uncertainties.

It's a time for celebration and conviviality and everyone is invited to join in. Through all stages of the wine producing process there is plenty to do — picking, pressing, cellaring and bottling. Then, of course, a satisfying meal with local wine — a perfect end to the year.



The Winemaking Cycle

Azambuja

There's an innovative wine museum, the 'Vila Museu do Vinho', in the little town of Aveiras de Cima in the Azambuja district. It's designed to educate in a relaxed, hands-on way, taking visitors through the vineyards and all stages of the winemaking process, bringing it to life in layman's terms. The guides are the winemakers and producers themselves, each with in-depth knowledge and a real passion for their craft. Don't miss the town's exuberant — but informative — **Wine Festival** in mid-April.



Farms and Wineries

In many cellars across Ribatejo there is a delicate balance of tradition and modernity. The long established farms often make a point of preserving the old presses where batches of grapes are still trodden to release the juice. At the same time they invest and modernise their wineries in order to take advantage of new technology and innovation and to ensure a higher quality of wine. Best of all, wines are of course taste tested against the finest local gastronomic produce to ensure a perfect marriage of food and wine.



Terroir

The *terroir* has a major influence on any wine: a combination of soil type, aspect and micro-climate that brings out the true varietal character of each wine.

The flood plains of the Lezíria do Tejo are rich, alluvial soils, extremely fertile and ideal for white wines. The heathlands are dry with a low rainfall and sandy soils, providing lower quantities but excellent quality, well matured red and white wines. Elsewhere the clay-limestone soils of the Bairro, bordered by the rugged Porto de Mós, Candeeiros and Montejunto massifs, are ideal for rich red wines.

Turismo do Ribatejo

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