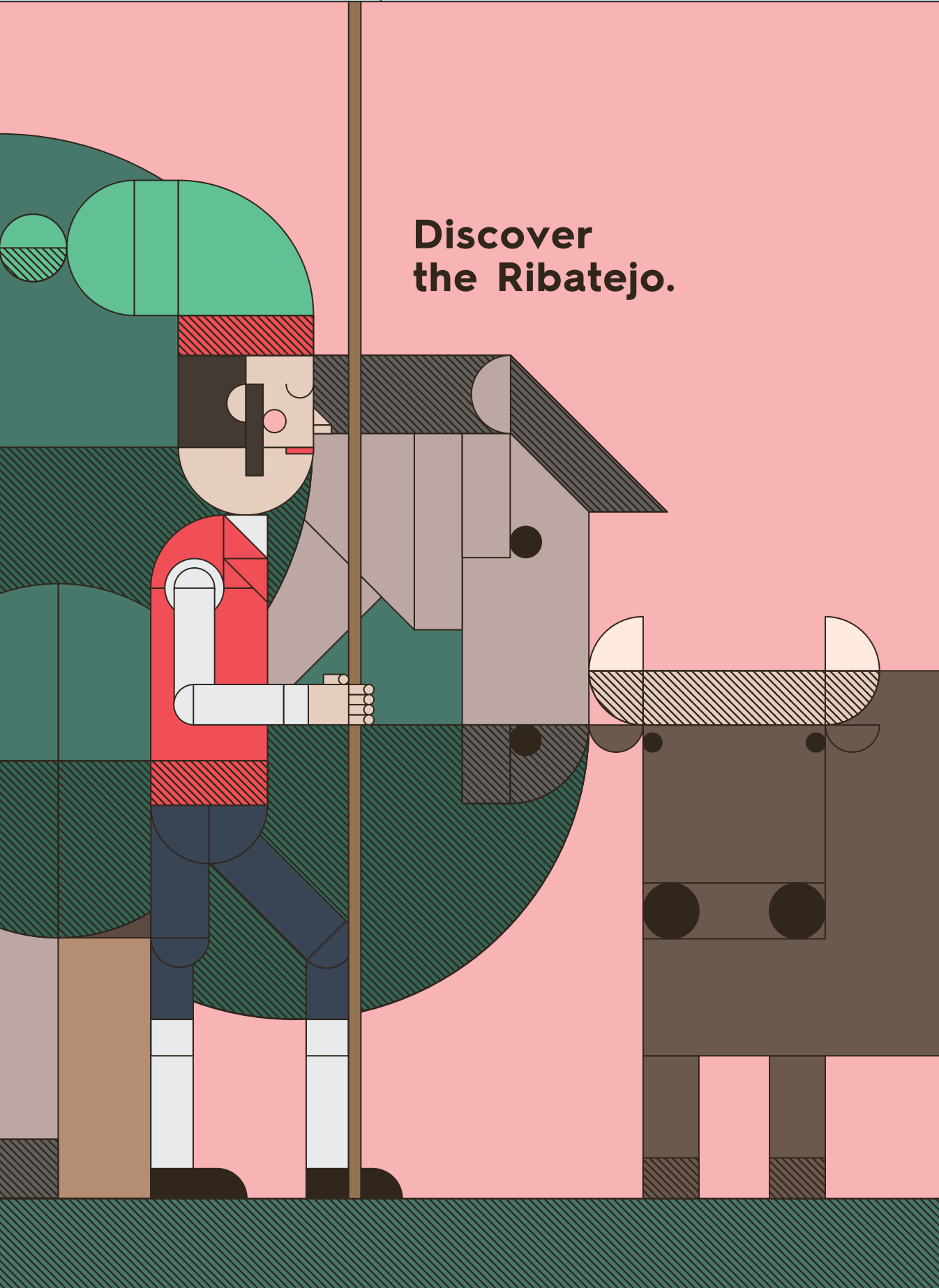


Ribatejo
Share the passion

Ribatejo

**Discover
the Ribatejo.**

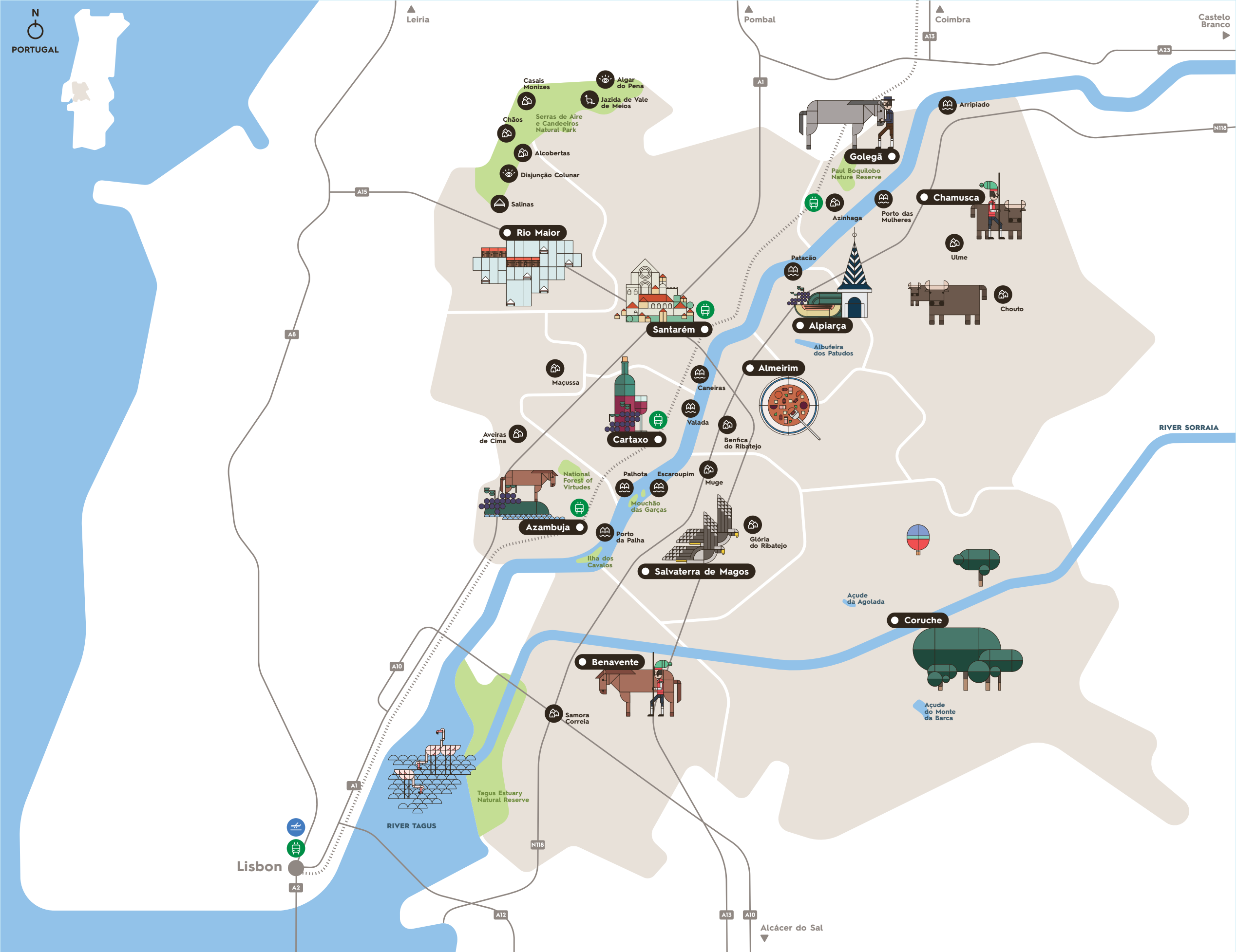


Getting there:

-  **by car**
various routes and options
-  **by train**
connections to Santarém
cp.pt
-  **by bus**
rede-expressos.pt
-  **by air**
flights to Lisbon

Guide & map of Ribatejo

Ribatejo



Welcome to the Ribatejo

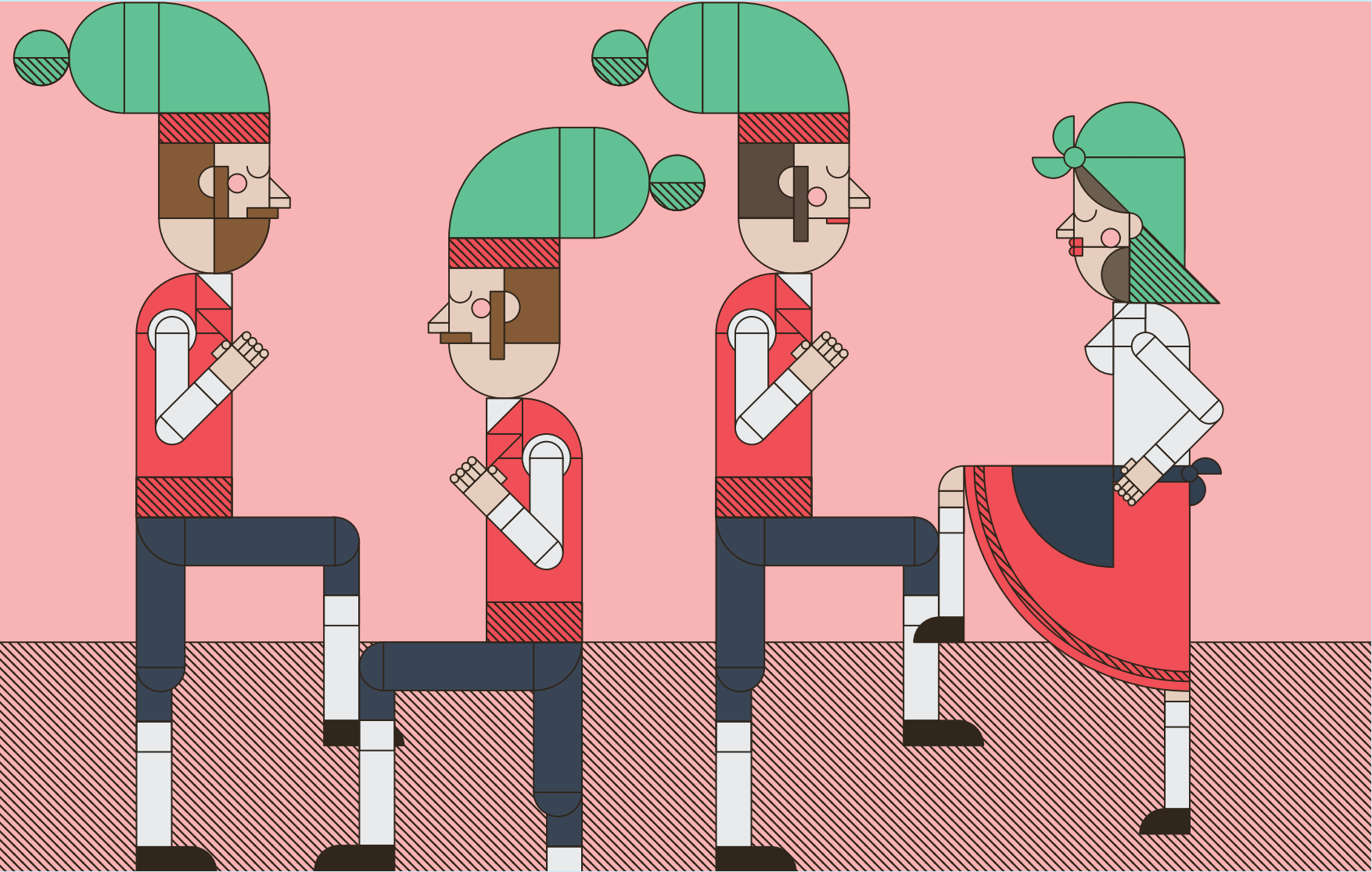
What are you waiting for!

This is a region shaped by the slow-moving waters of the Tagus river. The river has irrigated the land, provided livelihoods and communities and helped form the Ribatejo’s history. The landscape may be naturally beautiful but carving out an existence and overcoming natural obstacles was never easy. It made the Ribatejo people hardy, but creative too and always ready to celebrate life with vigour and cherish their traditions with passion at every opportunity.

Today it is a fascinating region where tradition meets modern innovation. Superb produce is cultivated in abundance and is key to a remarkable gastronomy of authentic flavours and exceptional quality. The rolling landscape and lush pastures are dominated by the iconic thoroughbred Lusitano horses and the majestic black bulls, aloof and imposing.

Explore this colourful region, escape the crowds and marvel at the ancient churches and palaces, wander the narrow streets of sleepy villages and historical towns. And, of course, come along to a festival – experience the thrill of the fandango, the flashing red and green of the *campino* herdsmen, the plentiful wine and fine food.

These are truly special days and there is always a place reserved for you.



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 finest 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 <i>sopa da pedra</i> (stone soup) is a signature dish with a great back story – be sure to try it.	Azambuja A rural area, where the <i>campino</i>, 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 <i>quintas</i> 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.

A Glorious History

Looking back to the region’s past

Over the centuries, indeed since the Tagus river first flowed, the Ribatejo has been inhabited by many different peoples. Early Neolithic settlers were drawn by the fertile plains and their legacy can be seen in today’s landscape and in the region’s museums.

During the medieval period the Ribatejo became a popular haunt for kings and courtiers who brought wealth to the region, building churches and chapels, convents and shrines. Away from the Royal Court, they were able to enjoy the rural life, indulge in a little intrigue and spend time practising falconry and hunting at Almeirim and Salvaterra de Magos.

The renowned navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral, having discovered Brazil, settled in Santarém and is buried there. The great religious orders helped shape the region with their magnificent churches and convents, creating architectural monuments that are awe inspiring to this day.

The Ribatejo has a rich, proud history brought to life by ancient traditions, while celebrating its vibrant modern way of life. Explore the Ribatejo, immerse yourself in its fascinating past and get to know this ‘land at the water’s edge’.



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 (Royal Falconry) 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 (Royal Falconry) have flown the skies above Ribatejo since the Middle Ages and the spectacle is no less arresting than it was then.

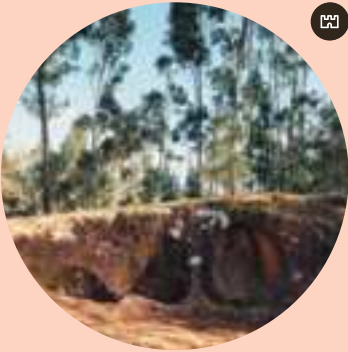


Cathedral of Santarém and Museu Diocesano

Santarém

Dating from 1711, the Santarém cathedral, a former Jesuit college, is actually Portugal’s newest cathedral.

Discover the extraordinary collection of religious art housed in the spectacular surroundings of the Diocesan Museum. With exhibits from the 13th century through to the present day, the religious history of Santarém is brought to life in thrilling detail.



Silos de Alcobertas

Rio Maior

Dating from medieval times, this is the largest group of open air storage chambers, or silos, on the Iberian Peninsula.

Cut from the sheer rock, they were used as a grain store, with heavy limestone or clay tops to keep the harvest safe from animals and water.

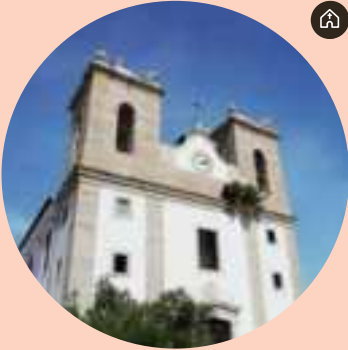


Dólmen de Alcobertas

Rio Maior

Dating from 4,000 years ago, this is one of the more curious monuments of the region. A chamber accessed via a short corridor of granite slabs, it was once a Neolithic burial site.

In the 15th century it was annexed by the Christian church of Sta. Maria Madalena to create a side chapel with the slabs of granite opening out into the church itself. A rare case of dual identity where pagan ritual meets Christian tradition.



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. The choir stalls and a spectacular altarpiece are further highlights.

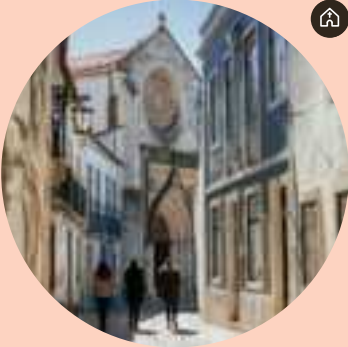


Ermida de Nossa Senhora do Pranto

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 de Nossa Senhora da Graça

Santarém

Set in the historic old quarter of Santarém, the church of Our Lady of Grace was completed in the early 15th century, having been begun in 1380.

The most notable feature is the Gothic façade with its intricately detailed portico and dainty rosette, said to be carved from a single block of stone. Facing the altar is the tomb of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the discoverer of Brazil.



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.

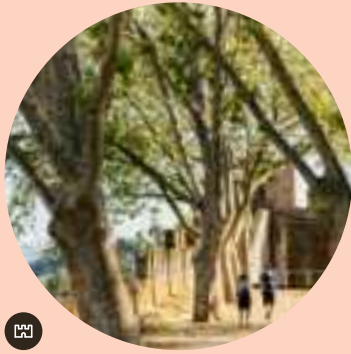


A Glorious Heritage

Spectacular places and fascinating stories

Despite millennia of development, the Ribatejo was shaped and forged by the effects of the modern world. There is a fascinating and rich heritage to be discovered across the region, including an internationally important photography museum and an architectural gem containing many of the very best examples of Portuguese paintings, sculpture and decorative arts.

Ribatejo is a melting pot of history, culture and nature — discover for yourself its secret charms in the context of the modern world.



Jardim e Miradouro das Portas do Sol

Santarém

Stroll through the peaceful gardens, overlooked by romantic towers and high walls, and you'll see. From here the epic Ribatejo landscape unfurls before you, with the vast Tagus river, wide and lazy, flowing slowly through the fertile plains. Visit the **Urbi Scallabis Interpretation Centre**, part of the Santarém museum, to get a better understanding of life here from the 8th century BC.



Vala Real

Azambuja

Constructed by the Marquis of Pombal in the mid-18th century, the Vala Real is a mighty canal linking Azambuja with the Tagus river. The original purpose was to facilitate transportation, as well as providing irrigation and drainage to the farmlands along its way. The canal stretches 26 km, the last 17 km of which are navigable, so be sure to take a trip on one of the traditional boats along with knowledgeable guides who can provide a deeper understanding of the surrounding landscape and eco-systems.



Casa-Estúdio Carlos Relvas

Golegã

Carlos Relvas was an accomplished man of many talents: farmer, politician, inventor, sportsman, bullfighter, musician and, above all, a great pioneering photographer.

His striking house was built in the late 19th century: detailed, elaborate and certainly different, with various ingenious enhancements designed to allow him to conduct his photographic work.

Constructed with complex glazing and curtains controlled by ropes and pulleys to control light, it was well ahead of its time. Structurally the house was romantic in style with ornate details to the exterior, almost like a Christian church or monument. Today it houses the Relvas photographic archive, including late 19th century portraits of people from all walks of life — farmers, beggars, aristocracy — as well as landscapes, buildings and animals.

The collection provides a real insight into everyday life in the Ribatejo over a century ago.



A Glorious Landscape

The exhilaration of nature at its purest

The Ribatejo landscape is iconic and beautiful, always influenced and defined by the majestic Tagus river. The horizons shift according to the seasons and the irrigating effect of the river itself, so there is constant change and you'll always find a varied landscape with its associated flora and fauna.

The vast low lying wetlands are the sprawling floodplains of the Tagus. These are the fertile soils, producing rice and wheat and lush pasture for cattle and horses.

To the north, on the right bank of the Tagus is harsher terrain where the olive and the vine reign and symbolize the alluring gastronomy of the region. On the left bank of the river lie the heathlands, famed for the coriander that grows freely there.

Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve

Benavente

Spanning over 50 square miles, the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve is part of Portugal's largest wetland area and one of Europe's most important

The birdlife is exceptional with several bird species setting up home here in winter (the best time of year for keen bird watchers), including ducks, flamingos, geese, avocets, bluethroat and firecrests, as well as raptors like ospreys and marsh harriers. The estuary is well located as a perfect stop-over for birds migrating from northern Europe to Africa.

So visit the reserve to enjoy the wide open spaces and the big skies, as well as the colourful array of wildlife on show along the various specially created birdwatching trails.

Serras de Aire and Candeeiros Natural Park

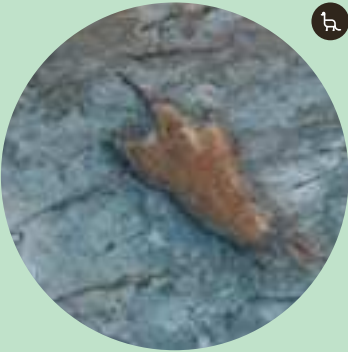
Santarém and Rio Maior

Something of a paradise for keen geologists and geographers, this park is set 30 km from the sea and divides the coast from the Ribatejo heartland.

It's all about the rock. Rugged escarpments, craggy gorges, rocky ravines and outcrops that define the landscape and give it unique character.

In many places water flows deep underground, over millennia carving out caves and grottoes along the fault lines and creating stalactites and stalagmites. Bats inhabit these dark places, a vital part of the delicate ecosystem.

The barren, wild heights are laced by hiking trails, suitable for trekking enthusiasts of all levels and abilities. Enter the park from Ribatejo via Salinas da Fonte da Bica, in Rio Maior, or from Alcanede near Santarém.



Vale de Meios

Santarém

Follow in the footsteps of dinosaurs! At this working limestone quarry countless dinosaur footprints have been discovered, dating back 170 million years to the Middle Jurassic period.

There are numberless imprints, in excellent condition, with more emerging as the quarry work continues.



Paul do Boquilobo Nature Reserve

Golegã

The boggy marshlands between the rivers Tagus and Almonda form this nature reserve, sufficiently important for UNESCO to have declared it a biosphere reserve.

The park's symbol is the startling white heron (seen here mostly in the spring), though there are well over 200 bird species nesting here as well as a variety of mammals and aquatic life.

It's a wild and unspoilt area, perfect for observing the fascinating wildlife while trekking along the nature trails with the cool breeze in your hair. Visit www.pauldobquilobo.pt for more information.



Gruta do Pena Interpretation Centre

Santarém

Discovered quite recently in 1985 by Joaquim Pena, the Algar do Pena is the largest underground cave, or grotto, in Portugal. A vertical pit descends 35 metres into a vast chamber of 125,000 cubic metres, with exquisite stalactites and stalagmites all around.

Quite simply, this is one of the most extraordinary underground landscapes you will ever see.



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

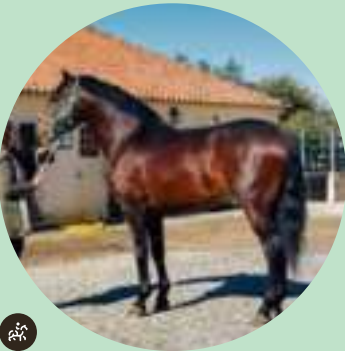


The Majestic Bulls

This statuesque bull is one of the symbols of the Ribatejo, reared for centuries on the lush pastures of the region's farmland.

It is one of fifty indigenous breeds unique to Portugal and has always been much prized for its wild nature, majestic bearing and size.

It is a ubiquitous and iconic sight in the vast pastures of the Ribatejo, often standing alone and aloof as you travel past



Pure Blood Lusitano Horses

The Pure Blood Lusitano is one of the oldest horse breeds in the world, with a lineage tracing back to 20,000 BC. With a noble bearing, docile manner and hardworking attitude, it has always been versatile and, to no surprise, it is an icon of the Ribatejo landscape.

Across the Ribatejo there are many studs and ranches where this elegant horse is bred and where visitors can admire these magnificent animals up close.



Riding Excursions

A great way to experience the Ribatejo is on horseback. That could be a gentle hack through the countryside or a more challenging canter along bridle paths and trails.

Travel at your own pace and enjoy the unspoilt scenery and clear air – it's a real tonic for the senses.



Reserva do Cavalo Sorraia Alpiarça

The Sorraia is the last descendant of the wild horse of the southern Iberian Peninsula. It was rediscovered in 1920 when steps were taken to protect the endangered breed.

The Horse Reserve in Alpiarça is a wide open space, ideal for a relaxing picnic and a chance to meet these wild but docile animals.



A Glorious Countryside

Get to know the rural life

Ribatejo has a long and proud tradition of agricultural excellence, set in a peaceful landscape of rural idyll. The rich farmland and fertile soil create a perfect environment for top quality livestock and healthy crops. The work of bodies like the National Association of Equestrian Tourism (ANTE) helps develop sustainable tourism, perhaps centred around events like the National Horse Fair at Golegã.

The rural traditions ensure the region can welcome tourists, keen to discover more about this colourful, fascinating region and its wonderful countryside.

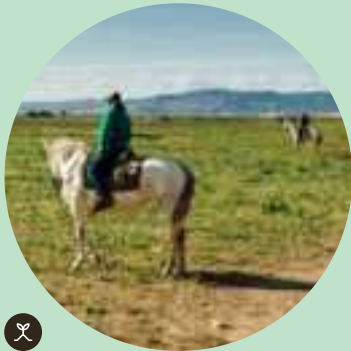
Admire a pure blood Lusitano stallion, unique to Portugal; lose yourself amidst the simplicity of nature while hiking or cycling; enjoy the sensational flavours of fresh, local, authentic Ribatejan produce. These are the simple pleasures that bring a region to life.



Arripiado Village Chamusca

One of the most beautiful villages in the Ribatejo, Arripiado lies in the Chamusca district south of the Tagus river. It is built on a slope leading down to the waterfront where the slow-moving waters provide a superb reflection of the village.

Take the little ferry across the river for spectacular views looking back at the village which is notable as being the gateway to the wetlands of the Ribatejo.



Companhia das Lezírias

Benavente

The Companhia das Lezírias (often reduced to ‘CL’) is a state-run agriculture and forestry organisation founded by the Crown in 1836. Across 80 square miles it combines agriculture with ecological work while also playing an educational and recreational role.

The main crops are corn, rice, olives and wine, but cork is also an important part of the operation. The Pure Blood Lusitano horse is bred here — and this is a great place to try your hand at riding one. There is also a herd of some 4,000 cattle on the land, raised organically.

The company’s smallholding allows youngsters to participate in simple activities, looking after the animals and planting vegetables.

And for the more active outdoor enthusiasts there are guided tours of the estate with hiking and mountain biking trails being particularly popular.

Why not finish off with a visit to the cellar for a wine tasting and a chance to sample some of the local Ribatejan delicacies produced here?



Agrotourism

A form of tourism in rural areas where guests, staying on farms and smallholdings, are encouraged to participate in the agricultural way of life. In the Ribatejo guests can experience life as a farmer, witness the day to day life of cattle breeders and generally get a better understanding of the place where they are holidaying. As a contrast to city life, or the usual domestic routine at home, it is an energising and illuminating experience.

The *Montado* Ecosystem

Coruche

The savannah-like terrain is a distinctive feature of the Portuguese countryside, especially around Coruche. Dominated by scattered holm and cork oaks, with surrounding pasture and cultivated fields, it is more than just a beautiful landscape on an epic scale.

A unique habitat has evolved, home to a diverse range of flora and wild animals and birds, with a delicate biodiversity and a rare balance between man and nature.

The *montado* is also fundamental in ecological terms, helping prevent desertification. Programmes are in place to ensure water conservation, soil conservation and carbon sequestration.

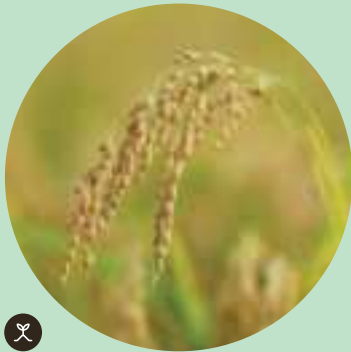
The countryside is ideal for low impact activities like hiking and cycling, as well as painting and photography. Every visitor can play a part in its protection.



Cork

One of the most sustainable and environmental friendly materials in the world, cork is the bark of the cork oak. A natural raw material with a range of useful properties. It is light, waterproof, compressible and elastic, is a thermal and acoustic insulation, resists friction and has slow combustion. In addition, it is 100% biodegradable, renewable and recyclable.

Learn more about cork at the **International Cork Fair** or come for the harvest between May and August



The Rice Growing Cycle

Spring is when thoughts turn to the new crop, the fields are prepared for sowing, which takes place at the end of April. By June weeds have begun to crowd out the crop, so they are controlled to allow the rice to flourish.

After the high summer growing season the harvest takes place in September. Once hard, manual graft, it is now mechanical, of course. The rice is dried and prepared for storage before eventually arriving on our plates.



Carolino Rice

Since 2008 Carolino rice, or Carolino das Lezírias Ribatejanas PGI, has been officially recognised by the EU as a Portuguese product with special Protected Geographical Indication status.



Wine

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.



Olive Oil

The picking of the olives begins early. Sheets are laid out under each tree and the branches are shaken to release the precious olives which can then be easily gathered up.

Back at the mill, the olives are then separated from the leaves, twigs and debris before milling commences. As they are pressed, the first glimpse of the golden thread of oil is an exciting moment for all olive producers.



Melon

The Ribatejo has a long history of producing melons, but also watermelons, a favourite for many.

The fertile soils of the floodplains, the mild climate and the plentiful sunlight create perfect conditions for these delicious fruits. Try one fresh from the field when you visit and experience the difference that eating local produce makes.

A Glorious Tradition

Remembering the past, living for today

The Ribatejo tradition is hard to pin down and define. The landscape may be serene and beautiful today but in the past this was a harsh, challenging place to eke out a living and merely survive. The resilience of the people shines through, with a zest for life and a readiness to celebrate life and cherished traditions always apparent.

The Ribatejan people are hard working and no strangers to obstacles, never forgetting the sacrifices and traditions of their forebears. The ancient festivals are moments to treasure and remember, as well as to celebrate and party. No such occasion is complete without the fandango, an intense regional pride and a vast spread of local dishes and fabulous wines. Little has changed in many centuries, so be part of it.

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.



Palhota Fishing Village

Cartaxo

Palhota is a typical, traditional fishing village with distinctive, rustic buildings raised up on stilts over the water. Follow the **Tapada Route** for a walking and nature stroll through the history of the Tagus river fishermen.

Along the way enjoy the unique flora and fauna of the riverside environment, while getting to know the people and customs of the fishing communities.



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**.

Festival in honour of Nossa Senhora do Castelo

Coruche

Every August Coruche puts on a wonderful spectacle for this festival. There's a traditional procession with magnificent fireworks by the river and music that plays into the night

The streets come alive with activities and entertainment, street stalls and a party atmosphere.

The Avieiras Villages

During the 19th century the *avieiros*, migrants from up-river, began to move down the Tagus. 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.



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.

Glorious Festivals

Celebrating the music, tradition and flavours of Ribatejo

Ribatejo’s calendar is full of festivals and feast days. Whether religious, gastronomic or traditional in nature (probably all three), there’s a packed schedule with plenty of excitement and colour. And, of course, music, wine and gastronomy of the region are showcased without hesitation.

One thing is certain, there is some kind of festival in Ribatejo right through the year.



Festas do Foral, dos Toiros e do Fandango

Salvaterra de Magos

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

Vibrant concerts, grilled sardines, intricate craftwork, unique dancing folklore and local 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 traditional herdsman, 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.

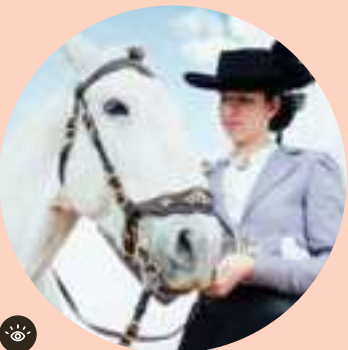


Expoégua e Romaria a São Martinho

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.



Portuguese Riding Outfits

Golegã

Dressing for riding in traditional garb can be a complicated affair. But there are some basic rules. Everyone wears a hat and appropriate boots or footwear, possibly with special leggings.

Men, or *cavaleiros*, should wear an open jacket over a shirt

Women can wear either men’s or women’s outfits. Always a white shirt, with single or double cuff for men (never a tie), and a bow or brooch for women.

Women must also hold their hair in place with a hair net and the horse itself must be harnessed in the correct, traditional manner.



The *Barrete*

The *barrete*, or traditional cattle herdsman’s hat, is 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.

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 talismanic 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 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.



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.

A Glorious Gastronomy

A feast for the senses

In the Ribatejo the party always begins and ends at the table. The gastronomy of the region is rich and varied, of the highest quality and always 100% authentic. From all corners of the region, whatever the terrain and agricultural conditions, there are specialities that reflect each local area.

Take a hunk of speciality bread, made from flour from the fertile floodplains, dip it in golden olive oil from the endless groves and savour the finest meat fed on the lush pastures. The freshest of fish, local rice, cheeses, amazing cakes and wonderful melon make choosing your meal ever more difficult.

The gastronomy festival held in Santarém is a fantastic chance to get an understanding of the variety and quality available.



Ensopado de Enguias

One of the signature dishes of the Ribatejo, this hearty eel stew makes good use of the eels that are caught swimming up the Tagus. The eel also features in other dishes like kebabs or fried eels with beans and rice.

Best enjoyed during March, the **Mês da Enguia** (Month of the Eel), in Salvaterra de Magos, and during the **Quinzena da Enguia** (Enguia Fortnight) in Benfica do Ribatejo.



Toiro Assado no Forno com Arroz de Feijoca

This dense, rich dish is a tribute to the flavoursome *toiro bravo*, the majestic black bull that is synonymous with the Ribatejan heritage.

The beef is darker, denser and more intense than the usual, and comes with bread and a speciality Carolino rice dish – the classic rice of 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 *campino* working in the field.

A thick slice of bread is charrilled over coals, 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).



The Flavours of Ribatejo

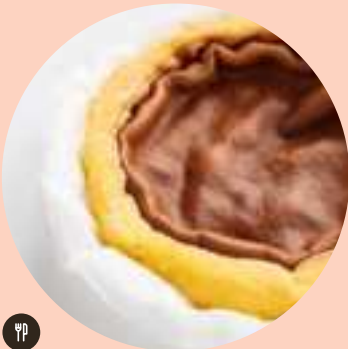
Whether you are a serious foodie, a wine enthusiast or simply a lover of good food and wine.

The *Guide to Lezíria do Tejo Certified Restaurants* and the *Ribatejo Wine Tourism Guide* are a great place to start your gastronomic journey. You'll be guided through traditional farms, state of the art estates and artisan producers.

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. Follow the processes, watch the preparation, and finally taste the end results.

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!

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



Pão de Ló

This simple speciality of the Rio Maior, dating from the 1700s, is a twist on the sponge cake.

There are three basic ingredients: eggs, flour and sugar which combine to create many variations, dictated by the quantity of ingredients and the cooking time. Generally though, the desired result is a sunken centre, moist or even gooe. Mmmm.... delicious.



Caspiadas

Traditionally this was a simple type of rustic bread created by the poorest people of Pontével who, despite poverty, offered these to visitors.

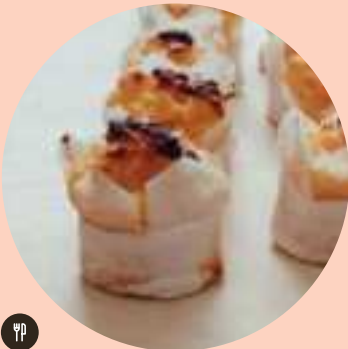
Using cornmeal, sugar, olive oil, lemon zest and cinnamon, a dough was formed then flattened on a cabbage leaf that served as a base.



SS de Amêndoa

Fancy something sweet with your coffee? You will see these tempting you in the café windows so it's sensible to be prepared! These crisp, dry biscuits, flavoured with almond and cinnamon, are much enjoyed throughout the Ribatejo region.

Although the origin of this recipe is unknown, they are especially popular in Alpiarça where they are venerated as a regional delicacy.



Celestes de Santa Clara

These delicious treats were created in the Convent of Santa Clara in Santarém where, according to legend, the recipe was bestowed by angels on to the nuns as a reward for their faith.

Made with almonds, eggs, sugar, butter and lemon, the *celestes de Santa Clara* are a real revelation and can be enjoyed, without guilt or need for forgiveness, in the bakeries and cafés of the city.



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.



The Winemaking Cycle

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



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.

Red Grape Varieties

Castellán
Perhaps the most common grape variety of the region due to its versatility, and its ability to impart tantalising wild fruit aromas. It's found in many red wines and also a number of rosés, sparkling wines and white wines, all made from the red grapes.

Trincadeira
Frequently used in partnership with the Castelão variety, Trincadeira has good, fresh acidity, which gives a characteristic elegance and aromatic notes of blackberry and plum.

Aragonez
Originally from Spain, where it is known as Tempranillo, it is also called Tinta Roriz in the Douro. In Ribatejo it is grown in the clay-limestone soils of the Bairro, where the climate is hotter and drier.

Touriga Nacional
One of the noble Portuguese grape varieties, initially cultivated in Dão, but quickly introduced in the Douro, where it is used in Port wine. Recently its potential for quality red wines was recognised and it found its way to the Ribatejo where it thrives.

White Grape Varieties

Fernão Pires
The most planted variety in Ribatejo and the one that is most commonly used in the region's white wines. It is harvested early to capture the heady floral aromas and hints of soft fruit before they become blowy and overblown.

Arinto
An excellent variety, grown across the region and prized for its lively acidity which gives a particular freshness to the wines.

Chardonnay
A famous variety of course, originally from France and cultivated all over the world. It thrives under the Ribatejan sun and produces appealing, mouth-filling wines, rich and heady but dry.

Sauvignon
A variety noted for its fragrant aromas, zesty and refreshing, with a lovely balance of fruit and acidity.

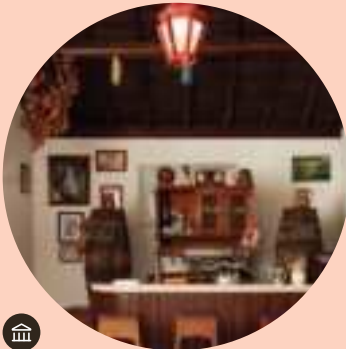


Glorious Wine

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.



Museu Rural e do Vinho

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.

Turismo do Ribatejo

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Getting there:

-  **by car**
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-  **by train**
connections to Santarém
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