

Walking the Western Algarve

Tour Style: European walking holidays

Destination: Portugal

Trip code: AGLCL

2 & 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Stretching from Silves to the Atlantic seaboard, the Western Algarve is perfect for walkers keen to navigate dramatic cliffs, secluded coves, and unspoilt beaches. Highlights include exploring the pine, oak, and eucalyptus forests around the Serra de Monchique, taking in Atlantic Ocean views on the Seven Hanging Valleys trail, and spending time in historic towns and villages where Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman, and Moorish conquerors have all left their mark.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Gatwick, including baggage and transfers (flights available from other airports - price may vary)
- A choice of 2 guided walks per day with local leaders (on walking days)
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 7 nights' accommodation in Lagos
- 7 breakfasts & 7 dinners
- All in-destination transport

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Discovering this wild and western coast on foot
- Exploring charming fishing villages
- Visiting Cape St Vincent, Europe's most south-westerly point
- Heading for the hills of the Serra de Monchique
- Walking the famous Seven Hanging Valleys Trail
- Staying in the charming coastal town of Lagos

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 2 and level 3 graded Activity, Easier walks: 4 to 7 miles (6½ to 11km) sometimes on rough and rocky paths. Up to 700 feet (210m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 6 to 11 miles (9½ to 17½km) sometimes on rough and rocky paths. Up to 1,300 feet (390m) of ascent in a day.

ITINERARY

Day 1: ARRIVAL DAY

Arrive at your hotel in Lagos. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: Lagos Coastline

With sandstone cliffs towering over the turquoise sea below, the dramatic coastline to the west of Lagos is one of the most spectacular natural features of the Algarve.

Lagos' lighthouse sits atop the Ponta da Piedade headland, where a network of boardwalks allows visitors to enjoy the impressive display of jagged rock arches, sea stacks, and caves.

Option 1 - Lagos Coastline: Porto De Mós To Lagos

Distance: 5.5 miles (9km)

Ascent: 350ft (105m)

Our easier walk begins in the charming village of Porto de Mós village, known for its vast golden-sand beach. We'll set off on a scenic cliff-top hiking trail that leads to Ponta da Piedade.

After marvelling at the far-reaching coastal views, we'll continue walking along the boardwalks to reach the old quarter of Lagos. This historic town sits at the mouth of the Bensafirim River and bears remnants of Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman, and Moorish architecture. If time allows, stop by the beautiful Santo Antonio church, also known as the golden church thanks to its impressive Baroque gilt work. After a short break we'll return to the hotel on foot.

Option 2 - The Algarve West Side: Praia Da Luz To Lagos

Distance: 8.5miles (14 km)

Ascent: 650ft (200m)

The harder walk option today starts in pretty Praia da Luz, a small village set around a sandy bay, sheltered from the Atlantic by towering cliffs. From here, we'll climb to the Rocha Negra headland, a unique local natural feature of volcanic origin from 150 million years ago.

Take in the views as we follow the cliff tops, before descending into Porto de Mós village. From there, we'll follow the same route as option 1 above, passing through Ponta da Piedade and Lagos on our way back to the hotel.

Day 3: Sagres & The History Of The Empire

The soaring sea cliffs of Sagres provide views over some of the Algarve's most dramatic scenery. Europe's most south-westerly point is Cape St Vincent, a wild, windswept headland of jagged cliffs that rise to 70 metres above the crashing waves. Perched atop the churning waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Fort Sagres tells the tale of Portugal's maritime history while Cape St Vincent Lighthouse helps ships avoid disaster by throwing out a beam visible from 60 miles – it's with one of Europe's brightest lighthouses.

Option 1 - Cape St Vincent To Sagres

Distance: 7.5 miles (12 km)

Ascent: 170ft (50m)

This walk begins from beautiful Cape St Vincent, known by the Romans as *Finis Terrae* - the End of the World. The jagged cliffs here rise up to 70 metres above the waves below and form the most south-westerly point of Portugal and of mainland Europe.

Following clifftop paths used by local fishermen for centuries, our walk passes first by Beliche Fortress before reaching the bigger, and more impressive Fort of Sagres. Built to protect the town from coastal invasion, this 15th century fort sits on a blustery outcrop that has had religious significance since Neolithic times. We'll then continue along the coast, completing our journey in the centre of Sagres.

Option 2 - Telheiro Beach To Sagres

Distance: 10 miles (16 km)

Ascent: 300 ft (90 m)

Our harder option today starts at the dramatic Telheiro Beach, the southernmost beach on the west coast of the Algarve.

After taking in the stunning scenery of wild open ocean from atop the cliffs, we'll walk along the Fishermen's Trail, part of the Vicentina Route, until we arrive at beautiful Cape St Vincent. From this point, we follow the same route as option 1, back to the centre of Sagres.

Day 4: MONCHIQUE MOUNTAIN RANGE

A panoramic landscape of sea and mountains scattered with small, whitewashed villages, the Monchique Mountains are almost made for trekking. This igneous rock massif of low mountains is famous for its diverse indigenous wildlife and features two of the Algarve's tallest peaks - Foia and Picota at 997 and 773 metres respectively. Our walking routes take in sections of the Via Algarviana Grand Route and on a clear day, the highest points offer incredible views of the sea.

Option 1 - Monchique Mountain Range: Alferce Circular

Distance: 6 miles (9.5km)

Ascent: 1410ft (430m)

After an hour's drive, we'll arrive in Alferce, a quaint village nestled in the landscapes of Monchique. We'll begin our walk by following the boardwalks that cross Barranco do Demo before a steady ascent that leads to the archaeological site of Cerro do Castelode Alferce - an Islamic fortification which was probably erected in the 9th century AD.

Our onward path offers stunning views over the Demo Valley, with small glimpses of the sea, and later, the Odelouca and Arade dams. After a winding descent, we arrive at another junction of Barranco do Demo, where we cross the stream and begin our steady ascent back to Alferce.

Option 2 - The Algarvian Way: Alferce To Monchique

Distance: 10 miles (16.5 km)

Ascent: 2200 ft (670m)

Our harder option follows the same route as option 1 to the top of Cerro do Castelo de Alferce. From here, we'll head towards the village of Monchique. This region has been renowned since Roman times for its thermal springs and waters thought to have healing powers.

Using centuries-old dirt paths, we'll cross part of the Monchique Mountains through a magnificent stretch of cork-oak forest. Along the way, we'll pass alongside Picota, Monchique's second-highest peak, which reaches 773 metres above sea level.

Day 5: FREE DAY

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently, or visit local places of interest. Options include:

Lagos:

This historic town is easily accessible by bus. Take a stroll through the warren of cobbled streets in its old town to see ancient Roman and Moorish walls or head to the waterfront to explore the pretty harbour. Lagos was once the capital of the Algarve and has a rich seafaring past. One of the area's heroes is Henry the Navigator whose expeditions to explore Africa in the 15th century departed from Lagos harbour. The building that housed Europe's first slave market – the Mercado dos Escravos – is still standing and is now home to a museum that details the cruel realities of the slave trade.

Boat trips from Lagos:

Whether you want to see the dramatic sea caves at Benagil, relax on a coastal cruise or search for local wildlife on a dolphin-watching trip, there are a variety of ways to discover the Algarve coast by boat from Lagos.

Day 6: VICENTINE COAST

Wedged between the Atlantic and the Monchique Mountains, the Vicentine Coast has stunning landscapes, and lots of flora and fauna but very few people. Vicentina Natural Park is the longest stretch of protected coastline in Portugal and is sprinkled with pristine beaches framed by glorious schist and limestone cliffs. We'll walk along centuries-old paths used by locals to reach the beaches and the best fishing grounds that now form the Fishermen's Trail and part of the Vicentina Grand Route. With luck, we'll get to observe the barnacle catchers challenging the tides and the turbulent waters of the Atlantic Ocean to collect this delicacy.

Option 1 - Coastline Pathways: Amoreira Beach To Arrifana

Distance: 6miles (9.5km)

Ascent: 490ft (150m)

Our short option begins at Amoreira Beach. Walking south of the Aljezur stream, we'll follow the Fishermen's Trail – a coastal path used by locals to access the beaches and fishing grounds. Sculpted by wind, sea, and sun, the natural landscape is a sight to behold here. Towards the end of our walk, we'll pass the ruins of Arrifana Fortress, before reaching the picturesque seaside village of Arrifana.

Option 2 - Historic Pathways: Alzejur To Arrifana

Distance: 11 miles (18kms)

Ascent: 1145ft (350m)

Today's longer walk will start in Alzejur and make a steady ascent to the castle for a panoramic view over the estuary of the Alzejur River. We'll enjoy some time in the town of Alzejur before heading west along the stream and arriving at the coast, following the path to reach Arrifana's beach.

Day 7: HANGING VALLEYS TRAIL

The Seven Hanging Valleys Trail is one of the Algarve's most magnificent trails, recognised as one of the best walks in Europe. In the distant past, each hanging valley was connected to a stream that shaped the coastal cliffs into spectacular rock formations over millenia.

Near the Alfanzina Lighthouse, a small pine forest acts as an ecological haven for owls, rabbits, foxes and other wild species, and will also serve as a resting point during our walks.

Option 1 - Six Hanging Valleys: Marinha Grande Beach To Centeanes

Distance: 4 miles (6km)

Ascent: 270ft (85m)

We start our walk at the wonderful Marinha Beach viewpoint, the first of many attractive lookout points over the limestone rock formations and natural arches that make this trail an experience to remember.

The path is not technically difficult, but there are a few places where the terrain is slippery, so caution is advised. The trail passes the Alfanzina Lighthouse and rises above Carvalho Beach. Our walk ends at the lovely Centeanes Beach, backed by majestic, golden cliffs.

Option 2 - Seven Hanging Valleys: Marinha Grande Beach To Carvoeiro

Distance: 6.5 miles (10km)

Ascent: 450 ft (140m)

Today's longer option follows the same route as option 1 but continues beyond Centeanes Beach toward the Carvoeiro cliffs.

On the way, we'll see the impressive rock formations known as Algar Seco and the seventh valley, Vale Covo. Our walk ends on the stunning Carvoeiro waterfront, where we will have chance to rest and enjoy the views with a well-earned drink.

Day 8: DEPARTURE DAY

Return to the airport for your flight home. We hope to see you again soon.

ACCOMMODATION

Vila Gale, Lagos

The Vila Galé Lagos hotel is located right over the sands of the Algarve's beautiful Meia Praia beach, with sweeping views of the sea. Inside, you'll find stylish décor by renowned Portuguese designers, and 118 comfortable rooms complete with all mod-cons. The hotel's enormous pool makes it popular with keen

swimmers, while tennis courts, a multi-sports field, and a putting green add to the activity facilities. When it's time to relax, hit the Satsanga spa for a range of treatments, stroll in the gardens, visit the library for a quiet read or savour some of the typical regional cuisine.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flights' and you'll have the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help you reach your destination:

Shared group transfer

You can still purchase a seat on our group airport transfer, but you must arrive in destination prior to the main group. It is your responsibility to book flights which allow enough time to meet our shared transfer.

Please note, all flight times are subject to change. If your arrival and/or departure time changes and no longer fits our group transfer, we will be unable to delay departure for you. Should this occur, we will refund you the cost of the transfer and you can either make your own way to the accommodation or we can book a private taxi transfer (at your expense). HF Holidays cannot be held responsible for your onward travel if you are unable to meet the transfer coach.

Private taxi transfer

Depending on your destination, we may be able to arrange a private taxi transfer for you. Please call us up to 5 weeks in advance to enquire about availability and costs for this option on 0203-974-8865.

*Subject to availability

Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch

- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

Useful Information

Language: Portuguese

Currency: Euro

Changing money: There are several ATM machines in Lagos, with several banks located on the main road alongside the marina.

Electricity: 220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

Tap water: Is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel or local supermarkets.

Telephone code: If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.

To dial a UK number 0044

To dial a Portuguese number 00351

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote:

<https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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