ROUTE TO THE TRADITIONAL SALTWORKS

Access - park near the children's playground in Castro Marim. Go up the road to the right and cross over the bridge on the path to the left, you will find a sign indicating the start of the route.

Length - 2 km
Degree of difficulty - easy
Best time - Spring/summer to see the workings of the saltworks. In wet weather, it is not advisable to go beyond the paved path that leads to the harbour.

The traditional saltworks are made up of small reservoirs and ponds, varying greatly in shape and forming a veritable labyrinth. Water flows through a series of compartmentalised reservoirs from the supply inlet to the talhos (small square ponds where the salt is produced), progressively warming up and evaporating along the way. The salt season begins in spring, with the cleaning of the pans. By mid-June these are covered with a layer of white crystals and the first batch is ready to be harvested. The salt produced here is certificated and owes its high quality to the natural characteristics of the area and the use of traditional techniques.

ROUTE TO CERRO DO BUFO

Access - from Castro Marim, take the EM.125-6 heading west and after crossing a metal bridge, take the first dirt road to the left, where you will find a sign indicating the start of the route.

Length - 10.5 km (6 km on dirt road, 4.5 on highway)
Degree of difficulty - medium
Best time - All year, except in wet weather when the route is not recommended.

The route runs between the flood plain of the river and tree-covered slopes. The industrial saltworks, salt marshes and the Carrasqueira creek are on one side, with agricultural land on the other. Birds are everywhere in both these ecological zones. Flamingos, coots and waders are found in the wetland areas, as are storks, but the latter prefer to nest in trees in the drier areas, which are also the natural habitat of various passerines and birds of prey.

Useful advice
When visiting the Nature Reserve, protect yourself from the sun. Keep to the recommended paths and avoid disturbing the tranquillity of the places visited. Please do not take anything other than photographs or leave anything behind other than footprints.

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Location: in the extreme east of the Algarve, next to the border with Spain.
ROUTE TO THE VENTA MOINHOS SALT MARSH

On foot and/or mountain bike

Length - 6 km
Walk with information panels - 500 m
Degree of difficulty - easy
Best time - all year

The route follows the access road to the Information and Exhibition Centre and continues to the north as far as the River Guadiana. The section with information panels is to the south of the building, where a short walk reveals the different habitats to be found in this wetland: salt marshes, saltworks, and permanent and ephemeral ponds. Six panels provide information on the natural and cultural points of interest along the route. A telescope located next to the viewing area gives the visitor a clear view of the waterbirds that gather around the ponds. It is usually possible to see large numbers of waterbirds, with different species depending on the time of year: coots, grebes, mallard and various species of herons and waders.

Go on to Castro Marim, and don't miss a visit to this town, where traditional houses are still common, some with the typical decorative moldings of the Algarve. Climb up to the medieval castle, from which there is an excellent view over the estuary of the Guadiana and the traditional saltworks that extend to the east. To the southwest is the Fort of São Sebastião, built in the mid-17th century, from where there is a good view over the industrial saltworks.