

ROUTE TO THE TRADITIONAL SALTWORKS

2  On foot

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 to the use of traditional techniques.



Salt "mountains"




Stork's nest



Fig tree

ROUTE TO CERRO DO BUFO

3  On foot and/or mountain bike

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.

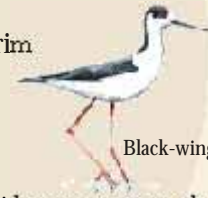


General view of the Reserve

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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Black-winged Stilt

Location: in the extreme east of the Algarve, next to the border with Spain.



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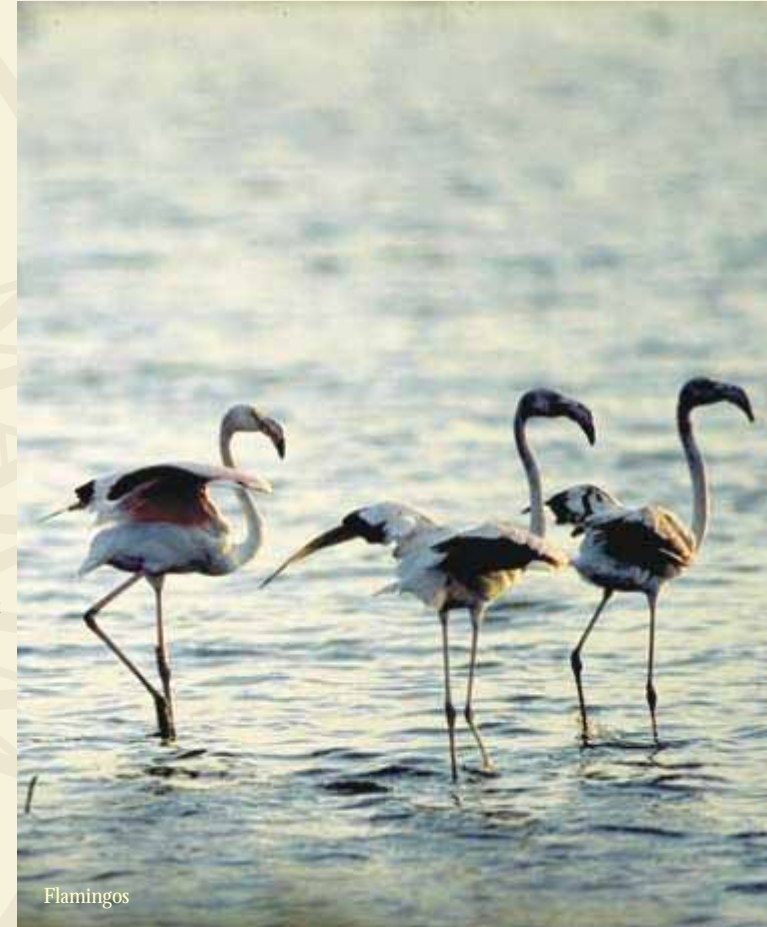
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Visiting the

RESERVA NATURAL do SAPAL de CASTRO MARIM e VILA REAL Stº ANTÓNIO



Flamingos





The Marshland Nature Reserve of Castro Marim and Vila Real de Santo António covers an area of 2000 hectares, two thirds of which is wetland made up of salt marshes, saltworks and creeks, the remaining third consisting of higher ground used for dryland agriculture. The Reserve was established in 1975 to protect its natural values and the landscape of the area. The Castro Marim salt marsh is an important refuge and breeding site for waterbirds, as well as for various species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans. It is also noteworthy for its characteristic marshland vegetation.

Access to the Headquarters and Information & Exhibition Centre: from the IP1 (Via do Infante), take the exit for Castro Marim/Beja and continue on the EN 122 towards Beja; after the exit for the international bridge over the Guadiana, turn right at the first junction, following the sign for "Reserva Natural".

- The Information & Exhibition Centre has the following services:
- permanent exhibition on the Nature Reserve;
 - temporary exhibitions;
 - multimedia table;
 - auditorium (projection of films for groups, advance booking required);
 - reception and sales counter;
 - café;
 - picnic area;
 - walk with information panels.



Information & Exhibition Centre

ROUTE TO THE VENTA MOINHOS SALT MARSH

- 1** On foot and/or mountain bike
- Length - 6 km
- Walk with information panels - 500 m
- Degree of difficulty - easy
- Best time - all year



Dunlin

The route follows the access road to the Information and Exhibition Centre of the Nature Reserve 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 threshing 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 mouldings 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.



Traditional Saltworks



Tide Mill



Grey Heron



Mullet

