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

Culture
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 herdsman, 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

**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 — bit 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 Averias de Cima, or take a kayak trip along the Vila Real or Royal Canal — look out for the colourful wildlife along the water’s edge!

**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 Sorraia 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 Arraipeado, just upriver, is one of the region’s gems.

**Coruche**

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 Averios fishing communities — traditionally painted and raised up on stilts.

**Cork Observatory**

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.

**Falcoaria Real**

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.

**Golegã**

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 huge pottery workshops dating from Roman times are on show.

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**Rio Maior**

The salt pans at Fonte de Bica are unique, quality 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.

**Salvaterra de Magos**

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**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.
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 Manu line 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.

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 deeply rosette, it bears witness to the impact and in uence 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.
Remodeled 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Church of the Palácio de Marnique 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 of ce and untimely death in 1805.

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.

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The choir of the cathedral is one of the largest in Portugal, but the most distinguishing feature is the octagonal cupola. A triumph of the Manueline style, it is one of the masterpieces of 16th-century Portuguese art and a stunning sight.

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 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.
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.

Craftsmanship, 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.

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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.

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 Fuy Bello lived.

The oldest church in Chamusca and built in honour of São Bfa, 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.
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 fierce 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.

Festas de Hossa 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 herdmen, 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 Champusc 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 herdmen, the campinos, with their bulls and horses are centre stage.

Festas 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.

The Colourful Festivals
The faith to survive

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Cruzeiro Religioso e Cultural do Tejo, Nossa Senhora dos Aveiros 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 Aveiros 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.
The Festa de Maio in Azambuja runs over five days. Over the last weekend of May, the May Fair in Azambuja runs over five days.

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.

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 red in colour, elongated and flopping over to the back of the head and topped with a tassel.

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 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.
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 sobriquet ‘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

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 huddled above the Tagus river. The pedestrian Tapada Bank 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.

Escaroupin Fishing Village
Salvaterra de Magos
One of the fishing villages settled by the migrant fishermen from Praia da Viena, this is a particularly fine example, founded in the 1930s.
Traditional wooden houses remain, simply constructed and painted j突y 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.

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 lummip is commercially fished during a season that runs from January to April and it was long a staple of the Avieiro 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, they rowed while he threw the nets and gathered in the catch.

Boat Trips on the Tagus
A popular activity on a warm, sunny day, step aboard a traditional river boat (a vario) 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 Muge River Route, in Azambuja, is one of the most popular.

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: 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.

Bulrush Baskets
Santarém
The bunho is a type of bulrush 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.

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.

Bunhos
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.

**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.

**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.

**Carne à Píneu**

A typical dish from Chamusca, demonstrating originally, frugally 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.

**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 was often eaten as an accompaniment to meat or fish dishes, usually roasted cod.

**Magusto with roasted cod**

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

**Torricado**

The torricado is one of the most traditional dishes of the Ribatejo, stemming originally from the need for a single, substantial lunch for the camponeses 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 generally seasoned with dried tomatoes.

In Santa Maria de Correia there is even a Confraria do Torricado (Brotherhood of the Torricado).

**Pampilhos**

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

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

**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.

**Miga Fervida**

This 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.

**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.

**Eggs and lemon**

Make these square pastries irresistible with a morning coffee while watching the world go by from a café.

**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.

**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.

**Quadradinhos 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.

From Azambuja, to Bairro in the Ribatejo, to the Bairro in Santarém, the Tempting Gastronomy has something for everyone to enjoy...
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 tumbling mills extract the precious oil, 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.

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 Azambuja 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 tasted against the best local gastronomic produce to ensure a perfect marriage of food and wine.

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.

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 clay-limestone soils, extremely fertile and suitable for red wines.

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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.

Salt Mines

Rio Maior

At the foot of the Serra dos Cabeceiros, far from the salt water of the coast, the Salinas da Fonte da Bica have been quietly producing salt since 1777. 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.

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.
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