



The Algarve may not seem like the obvious holiday choice for the expat in Saudi, but for those of us needing to return to the UK, it offers a break in the sun without the need to spend another long flight avoiding the dreaded DVT. Add to that, the convenience of flights from a local airport, the ease of communicating with the indigenous population in English and the fascinating mix of original charm with modern facilities.

With 850 kms of coastline and 3,500 hours of sunshine per year, Portugal is a fabulous holiday destination. There are long, clean sandy beaches stretching as far as the eye can see and sheltered coves of warm white sand; attractive villages with waterside restaurants serving delicious fresh fish; a choice of highly drinkable local wines and charming courteous people whose friendship with the British has stood the test of time.

Blending into this ideal backdrop of inviting coastline and gentle countryside, whitewashed villas are an attractive part of the scenery. Sports enthusiasts will find ideal conditions and top class facilities; the golf courses are world-famous, the tennis establishments are highly acclaimed and the sun and the sea combine to create a paradise for all kinds of water sports. And if that wasn't enough, the country is steeped in history. Beautiful places in Sintra, Roman remains in the Algarve, imposing architecture in Lisbon and many museums display the great influence of the historical Portuguese maritime explorers. Now, there is a road linking the North to the South enabling the traveller to discover all of Portugal's treasures.

And it's the south where we spent some time this summer. The Algarve is amongst the top European holiday destinations and has something to offer everyone. Despite the obvious influence of tourism, a short drive inland reveals the true Algarve where life goes on much as it has for many centuries. Plenty of wooded hillsides and remote little villages when you want a change from the beaches.

At the heart of every good holiday is the right type of accommodation - and this year we struck it lucky. A last minute search on www.holiday-homes.com brought us to one of the homes of Hans & Kirsten

Hauserman at Armação de Pera. Their 3-bedroomed apartment was beautifully presented and maintained and it's a rental we would highly recommend. (See bottom right for contact details)

Armação is the name given to massive tuna nets which stretched up to 3 miles out to sea. The net, like a vast wall suspended beneath steel cables and bouys herded the migrating fish into boxlike traps. Pera is a small village nearby. Armação de Pera - the fishing net of Pera. Fleets of boats once guarded the nets and brought the fish ashore to be processed and canned. Alas today nothing remains of that once thriving industry and along the shores where the anchors and nets stood off season there are now only the hotels and apartment blocks. The apartment we found ourselves in was on a small quiet development to the west with a private path to the beach, yet only a short walk into town.

A few miles west is the former fishing village of Carvoeiro. The immediate coastline consists of spectacular cliffs, caves and beaches you have to see to believe, all washed by the clean waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The modern resort is situated immediately above the village of Carvoeiro, which in turn nestles between red ochre coastal cliffs in what must be one of the most beautiful areas of the Algarve. Historically, however, the Carvoeiro area has mainly had close connections with the sea - there are documents and maps to confirm this. Carvoeiro, is shown on a map which dates back to about 1621, compiled by Fernando Álvares Seco, based on an initial Rome edition dated 1561, which is considered to be the oldest printed map of Portugal.

East of Armação de Pera lies the main resort of Albufeira. In recent years Albufeira has grown from a tiny fishing village to become the most well-known holiday resort on the Algarve. In the process it has lost most of its original charm, indeed in the summer, tourists from all over Europe crowd the streets looking for the perfect watering hole in the town where something seems to be happening at every hour of the day or night. Albufeira now enjoys a reputation as Portugals liveliest and wildest party resort.

Behind the coast, and it seems visible from everywhere in the Algarve is the mountain of Monchique. As the road winds its way up from the coast you enter a different world. The light is dappled as it breaks through the trees which are everywhere. At the ancient spa of Caldas, warm water bubbles from the volcanic rocks and people still come here to bathe in the waters. Some days you can buy warm Pao com Chourico (bread with savoury sausage in it) straight from the traditional oven beside the village square. Above the small town of Monchique the road climbs out of the trees towards the summit of Foia. After the charm of the mountain communities the air traffic control radar domes and TV masts seem out of place. But the view ...

Travel



GURU



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