



ALVOR, PORTUGAL - THE HEART OF THE ALGARVE

By Caroline Preston

2021 and the familiar pattern of travel confusion continues, but at last, with a scattering of destinations permitted, there's an actual real possibility of travel.

I last visited Portugal's Algarve region around 20 years ago, still remembering my feeble attempt at golfing... what can I say; I tried, the assessment is, I'm more suited to the clubhouse.

And so, with Portugal 'green listed' and so much I still hadn't seen, this was to be my destination, a sun-worshipping, food exploring, cultural adventure in the Algarve.

Since busy, touristy tack isn't really my thing, I chose pretty Alvor, a smallish town located in the heart of the Algarve around an hour from Faro. This former important Moorish fortified town (Al-bur) and its harbour ooze Portuguese charm, the pretty narrow streets and ancient medieval castle and church make for pleasant viewing. Sadly you'll not see anything older since the obliteration of Alvor and its surrounding areas by the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, one of the deadliest earthquakes in history.

Alvor is a sun worshippers paradise, a quiet, and pristine sandy beach that stretches no less than 3.5km. Some areas are well-served with facilities that include beach bars, restaurants and lifeguards, perfect for families. The coastal area immediately beyond the beach remains marvellously under-developed with long wooden walkways that host beautiful views of estuary wildlife.

Alvor itself, having grown out of the old town, offers hotels and accommodation for most budgets. Hotel Alvor Baia was my choice, around half a mile from the centre, it's a largish complex with a huge pool and spacious modern rooms and apartments. It has all the facilities you could possibly want, with meals included so, hotel dining we dispersed with frequent eating out. This small town provides a surprisingly wide range of eateries, and as a fan of fresh seafood, this could not be better. Each evening the harbour would buzz with locals and holidaymakers alike, all keen to sample the catch of the day fired up on the smokey harbourfront grills at sunset.

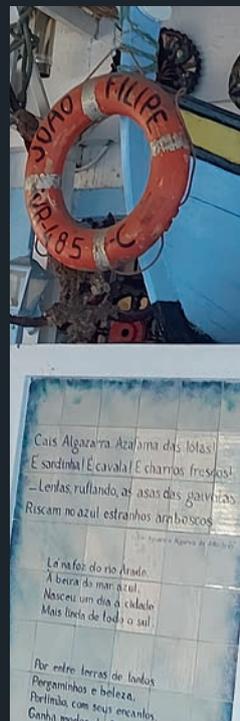
Conveniently located Alvor, is close to so many fantastic day trip destinations, by car or by organised tour, venturing outside your resort is an absolute must. A trip to the beautiful city of Lagos saw us tour the city in a 100%

electric-powered tuk-tuk, for history, culture and views of the famous caves, this is an absolute highlight. Other day trips followed, including the historic city of Silves and the pretty mountain village Monchique and its Mount Foia views.

Just 7km from Alvor is the port city of Portimao, a destination with the chance to see some more normal Portuguese life. As a former industrial fishing port, this city's economy is now mostly tourism and leisure. The old fishing docks have been re-imagined, now a scenic promenade where street art honours its heritage. Although there's little industrial fishing, seafood is still most definitely 'on the menu', and many excellent eateries exist. A solid recommendation is restaurant Marisqueira-a-Fabrica, freshness and quality without the tourist price tag; try the Arroz de Marisco (Portuguese seafood rice) delicious with a glass of local wine. You know you've had a great trip when you realise life doesn't get any better than where you are at that moment, so, if you're thinking of Portugal, try Alvor, it's the heart of the Algarve for a reason.

www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk

www.instagram.com/thejarvisjotter



Travel notes:

Caroline travelled with TUI Airways to Faro www.tui.co.uk, staying at the 4-star Alvor Baia Resort Hotel, Alvor www.hotelalvorbaia.com, June 2021. Car hire with Europe Car at Faro Airport via www.europcar.co.uk. Restaurant Marisqueira-a-Fabrica can be found on Av. Afonso Henriques near the museum of Portimao, www.instagram.com/marisqueira.a.fabrica. The Lagos Tuk Tuk operated by Nuno Silva, Tukano Tuk Tours www.facebook.com/tukanotuktours