

Algarve Insider's Guide

It's not just about the beach

1. Introduction	2
2. Adam & Rachel	
Walk from Forte de Almádena to Zavial	3
Restaurante Paraíso da Montanha	4
A Barrigada	5
Cervejaria Ferradura	5
Fonseca's	6
Padaria Odiáxere	6
Wild Oasis	7
3. Chef Rach	
Algoz Market	8
Garden Centres	9
Cliff Jumping in Gale	9
Piri piri chicken and chips at the Silves carpark	10
4. Caitlin	
Amoreira	11
Sítio do Forno	12
Boa Vida	12
5. Becca	
Pizza Party	13
6. Nat	
Elska Kitchen	14
Cat Hotel	15
Coffee & Waves	15
Owl Bookshop	16
7. Joel R	
Praia Da Amoreira to Monchique	17
O Sapinho – Figueira	18
Olhao	18
8. Ed & Sofie	
Praia do Barranco	19
Praia Amoreira	20
Praia da Ingrina and Sebastião Restaurant	20
Praia das Furnas	21

1. Introduction

This is Soul & Surf's take on a local area guide. A real insider's guide to our Algarve.

We don't want or need to add to the noise and give you another Lonely Planet-style tourist guide. You can look that up anywhere. This guide won't necessarily tell you about the best, flashiest restaurants, or where to go to get the best sunset (although those things are obviously brilliant and you should do those things too).

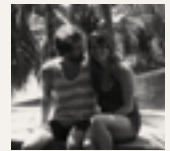
This is straight from the mouths of the people that actually live here, work here, have spent a lot of time here. It's where the staff run away to when they have a day off, or when we finish up for the season and give ourselves a little treat. Where the locals go to eat the best food. Where we spend our time when we are in these places. Most of this stuff is close to home – the everyday that we take for granted in these special corners of the world.

And it's the little gems we've found and assimilated over the years that are away from the tourists, off the beaten path. These special spots sometimes won't have the best decor, wifi or the best service (or any service at all). You may not be able to find them easily, the people that work there may not speak English to you, you might get lost, you might get something completely different to what you ordered. But you'll

be experiencing something real. And that's why we all travel, right?

So here is our version of the Lonely Planet for you. Anecdotes, tips and a peek into a life less ordinary.

2. Adam & Rachel



Adam & Rach joined us back in 2013, back when Soul & Surf was still in black & white. From humble beginnings baking cakes and working as surf coaches they've scaled the heady Soul & Surf heights.

Rachel

Walk from Forte de Almádena to Zavial

Park at Forte de Almádena (pronounced Al-MAD-ana) and hike to Zavial. It's a mystery how you get back from there. I think Adam is still wandering around working out how to get home.

In the black and white days, Forte de Almádena was used to defend the tuna fishery against pirates. Those sneaky pirates loved their tuna toasties, so I hear. Sadly there are no pirates there anymore (apart from sometimes a man that whispers to himself and likes to paint his dog in watercolours) but the really cool thing about this fort is that it is hanging off the edge of the cliff, and kinda looks like it is growing around the edge of the rock. This being Portugal, there are absolutely zero health and safety regulations, so you can clamber around the dangerously eroded structure to your heart's content (Of course we do not advise this. Stay safe out there). I got very excited about this place because I am a geek who likes old



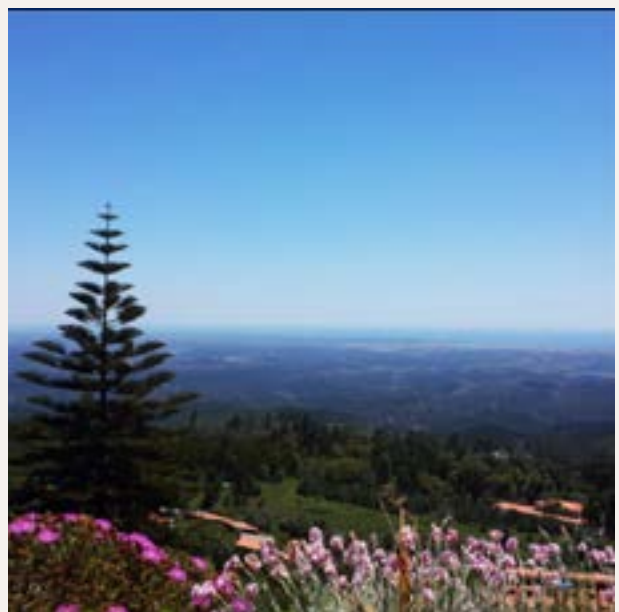
things and apparently also the fort was built on original Roman foundations.

From here, walk along the coastline, with the sea on your left. Apart from being a stunner of a hike, it is a good workout if you get a pace on. Lots of uppy-downy bits and scrambling, and you go through the very lovely beaches of Boca do Rio (also some Roman ruins here, next to the old fish canning factory if you look closely), Furnas, Salema and Figuera...it will take around 3 hours, depending on how much you stop to gawp at the view.

End your pilgrimage at Zavial, go for a swim and then eat octopus salad and garlic prawns at the Zavial Beach restaurant. The staff are authentically rude and the food is excellent.

Restaurante Paraíso da Montanha

Amazing views. Their Alentejo black pork cheek & sweet potato stew is one of the best I've had. And I have tested a few, let me tell you. Also the Nanna who makes it brings it out to you and if you try your best Portuguese at her she pats you on the shoulder in what I like to think is an encouraging, and definitely not patronising manner. Just me, maybs. Wash this down with a chilled Vinho Verde and stare wistfully into the middle distance at the glory of Monchique.



A Barrigada

Fish. Simple, local, cheap. Order all-you-can-eat fish (comes with refillable chips/potatoes and salad) for the win. Or Lisboa steak if you'd rather have a heart attack, the gravy is next level. Have the Figo do Queijo for dessert. They soak it in Medronho and set it on fire. And then you are drunk. Adam does not have this, he has Mousse de chocolate, like he has everywhere. Apparently this is one of the best.

Good Dão wines for reasonable prices.



Cervejaria Ferradura

This local favourite serves up lush bar snacks. Try the camarão alho (garlic prawns) or chouriço assado (grilled chorizo). Go for good local chat, cheap Cristal and old farmers in flat caps who you try and practice Portuguese with and accidentally buy a dairy cow. For an authentic experience, be brave, sit at the bar and order 'uma cerveja e uma bifana' (beer and a marinated pork steak sandwich) Or if you're lucky they'll have an iberico ham behind the bar and slice it up into wafer thin slices for you with the special ham knife. Have a port chaser at the same time if you're feeling fruity.



Adam

Fonseca's

Fonseca's in Odiaxere is a little local bar, five minutes walk up the road from the best bakery we've found (more on that later). Go to Fonseca's at night, after eating chicken at the chicken shop, and stand at the bar with the locals. They will ignore you for a while, which is a good time to buy a round. Then they will talk to you and this is your time to shine. If you want to fit in with the locals here you must drink a small bottle of Cristal accompanied by a Medronho.

Pao d'avo Maria

Rach couldn't find this bakery for probably three years without help, I'm still not convinced she knows how to get there to this day. It's not that confusing. It's by the windmill in Odiaxere, down a little side road. I have eaten a lot of pasteis in my time, but this little bakery consistently does the best ones I've sampled in the Algarve. Get them hot and fresh out the kitchen.

This bakery is also good for wildcard pastries.



Wild Oasis

An oasis in the wild. This little gem is hidden away amongst the trees in a corner of the Monchique mountain range. From the hotel, you can access loads of different walks - we circumnavigated one of the peaks and went all the way to the top of one called Picota. You can scale an actual mountain!

And the views are stunning – you can see the Barragem de Odelouca which is well worth a visit (it's about 25 mins drive from Wild Oasis). When we went to the Barragem the next day we went off piste and got scared we were going to be chased by wild boar. This did not happen and we were fine.

You can stay the night or book a table in the restaurant for a three-course vegan dinner (the house dessert is unreal), sourced where possible from their garden. Or if you want to visit during the day you can book in for a soup and a sauna! The sauna is wood-fired, and is next to a mineral plunge pool – all with an insane view over the valley.



"You can scale
an actual
mountain!"

3. Chef Rach



We really lucked out with Rach, who has been with us in Portugal since our first full season and has fed us ever since, working with Sofie to create a menu of nourishing delights.

Algoz Market...

...second Monday of every month. Sells everything from plants, Aljezur boots, local olive oil, fresh produce, woven baskets. But really I go there for the hot, fresh donuts. Farturas. They're a traditional Portuguese dessert which is a combination between a funnel cake and churros. They're deep fried and then rolled in cinnamon sugar. Crazy indulgent and delicious.



"Crazy indulgent
and delicious."

Garden Centres

They're in abundance all across the coast. Have an incredible selection of plants from cactuses, succulents, fruit trees and exotic flowers. One beautiful garden centre in Lagoa was my refuge last year when heavily pregnant during the summer. If it was too hot I would go to this garden centre and hang out amongst the amazing greenery under the sprinklers.



Cliff jumping in Gale

No specific location. It's a secret. If you know, you know. But it's lovely to walk around the coastline here with all its hidden alcoves, secret beaches and spots for jumping off.



Piri piri chicken and chips at the Silves carpark

'Tis the best chicken and chips I've had so far across the Algarve. No-frills canteen-style outdoor dining. No menu. Let them know you want chicken. They'll bring local pickles and bread to start (usually Algarvian carrot pickle) and then bbq'd chicken, homemade chips and salad, followed by the oddest dessert. A plate of sliced orange with boiled sweet potato and cinnamon. Apparently it is not common, Portuguese or a local delicacy. Just specific and quirky to this carpark diner and I love it!



"'Tis the best chicken and chips I've had so far across the Algarve."

4. Caitlin



Head of Vibes Caitlin has been with us since we opened the doors to S&S Portugal, she's bubbly and funny and always has a massive grin. She also makes everything look really nice.

Amoreira

My first recommendation for anyone visiting the Algarve is my favourite beach Amoreira... the river is perfect for mermaiding in the summer and the sand dunes are steep enough to give sand boarding a go.



"The river is perfect for mermaiding in the summer."

Sitio do Forno

My second most favourite spot has to be Sitio do Forno, a beautiful restaurant serving delicious, locally caught fish on the cliffs between Amado and Bordeira. Watching the sunset here is perfection!



Boa Vida

Last but not least, a Saturday night at Boa Vida skate bowl with music and drinks. Even if skating is not for you, you can appreciate the spectacle of it and have fun meeting some new people...



5. Becca



Becca is a Shiatsu practitioner who came out to Kerala as a volunteer and baked us cakes that still make us drool, just by thinking about them. We really, really liked her, so bought her over to Portugal to be our therapist.

Pizza Party

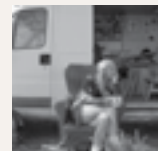
When Chef Rach and I first moved to the Algarve, we were relieved to be welcomed into the calm, safe and easy-going existence of a quiet country life. But after some time (not much time) we were gagging for some FUN... where was the dancing at?!

Not much into dancing on bars to cheesy pop, we eventually decided to venture out to the infamous pizza party in the hills of Monchique. It was probably the highlight of the year. Every Friday night, the pizza party runs like a mini secret festival set into the hill: three stages of reggae, drum and bass, techno - basically everything we'd been missing from dirty city life, all in one place. You can camp on site, the bushes are really comfortable – or stay sober and drive home...



"But after some time (not much time) we were gagging for some FUN... where was the dancing at?!"

6. Nat



We've known Nat for a very long time – she was one of our first guests in Kerala and has since worked with us in Sri Lanka and now here in Portugal. Nat is our Sustainability Consultant, Yoga Teacher and will be leading all things surf related. Phew!

Elska Kitchen...

...is culinary heaven. The sign is made out of glitter balls so really, what else would you expect.

I would describe it as Norwegian - Portuguese fusion food but they just have everything homemade, organic and lots of vegan options. ALL very delish, especially the tempura veggies. Apparently the chef used to work for Jamie Oliver. The homemade tahini is to die for. Once I went for brunch and had everything on the menu.



"Once I went for brunch and had everything on the menu."

Cat Hotel

My favourite thing about Meia Praia is the cat hotel. It's basically a 3-floored wooden house for stray cats. Even cuter are the old men who go and feed the cats. They seem very happy and content (the cats not the men) and they're very friendly (still the cats). Pete is my favourite, he's only got 1.5 ears but that doesn't hold him back, he's winning at life. King of the cat hotel, I'd say.



Coffee & Waves

My favourite thing to do in summer is to go and get unicorn toast (vegan cream cheese and rainbow sprinkles) and coffee at Coffee and Waves. I pretend I'm a digital nomad. They have cool art on the walls.

The barrister knows his stuff and makes a mean skinny macha latte. While you're there you can also order an overpriced pink longboard that looks great on Instagram. Don't go when there's swell at Porto do Mos as it's likely to be closed. Or on Mondays. Or Tuesdays. And Wednesdays. Watch out for the rush on Thursdays... And the weekend.



Owl Bookshop

For all your bookworm needs. And if you didn't have any the owner will make sure you do before you leave. Chances are you didn't need it but it sure as hell it will change your life. I bought Rachel Carsons "The Sea". Signed copy (by the previous owner).



"For all your bookworm needs. And if you didn't have any the owner will make sure you do before you leave."

7. Joel R



Pipped at the post by Corinne Evans and Nick Heath, aka 'the surfing chef', in the race to be The Best Surfer From Wolverhampton(™), Joel has shared his surfing knowledge with Soul & Surf guests in Sri Lanka and Kerala. He will soon return (fingers crossed sans 'tache) for his second season in Portugal.

Praia Da Amoreira to Monchique

One of my fave off-day things to do – first catch the early wind at Amoreira and get breakfast in Aljezur, my favourite west coast town. Praia Da Amoreira boasts a great right hander and gives me some great throwbacks to Crantock in Cornwall.

Then when ready for lunch take the stunning drive to the village of Monchique, with the best views of the Algarve from the top – you can see from Portimao all the way to Sagres on a clear day. There are a few other great viewpoints and lunch spots on the way to the very top – or foia – where, apart from an amazing view and a cart selling overpriced beers, there is not so much going on. When you come down from the top, take the dirt track towards the wind turbines for the Best Sunset Spot In The World (calling it).



"With the best views of the Algarve from the top – you can see from Portimao all the way to Sagres on a clear day."

O Sapinho – Figueira

Local restaurant ‘The Frog’ may look a little rough around the edges, have to admit. It took me at least a month of living in Figueira to buck up the courage to go and try my worst Portuguese there, luckily none was needed. Take a gamble and get the Prato Do Dia (plate of the day) for lunch, usually priced around 5 euro. Everyday food can change all the way from Bacalhau scrambled eggs, Calamari a la plancha to a hearty Portuguese lentil stew.

After that you need a good digestion trek, so walk from O Sapinho to Figueira beach for a dip, or a little sunbathing. Then why not stop at Raposeira’s pottery shop afterwards.



Olhao

Seafood lovers – Olhao is a little spot just east of Faro, quite a drive from Soul & Surf, but worth it for the traditional mercado with restaurants all along the front serving up a variety of fresh seafood from the daily catch – along with the very locally grown oysters.

I visited Olhao on a completely flat day surf wise – the town is a little worn down, but a proper Portuguese fishing village – as you might be able to tell I’m a fan of the ‘rough around the edges’.



8. Ed & Sofie



Are Soul & Surf's founders who found themselves in Varkala in 2009 and thought... I wonder if we could open a little surf & yoga stay here? They now divide their time between home-town Brighton and a mix of India, Sri Lanka & Portugal.

Praia do Barranco

Our first visit to the Algarve was in October 2009 in our beige campervan Neil. The bone-shaking dirt track nearly destroyed our van but the secluded, travellers-haven away from the big bad world was worth it. The surrounding bushes got a bit poo-ey with all those folks living in vans but that didn't put us off and now and again the surf was great. It's been sanitised, car-parked and de-wilded now but it still has it's magic.



"The secluded, travellers-haven away from the big bad world was worth it."

Praia Amoreira

Recommended by our crew already, but we wanted to mention it with kids in mind. We have spent a few great, long days on this beach. Take an inflatable for scooting down the river towards the sea, surf boards for the pretty decent wave and all manner of beach paraphernalia including some shade. We found an Octopus under a rock in the river-mouth one summer.

Praia da Ingrina and Sebastião Restaurant

Another family favourite, just round the headland from Zavial is this little inlet beach with a classic local seafood restaurant up top.



Praia das Furnas

Off the beaten path this beach could be at the end of the world rather than the Algarve. Go early or late season and you'll often have it to yourself, aside from the ubiquitous leathery old nude german man greeting you with a rear-view of his down-dog.



"Off the beaten path this beach could be at the end of the world rather than the Algarve."