



Estremadura & Ribatejo

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Why Go?

Stretching from the Rio Tejo to the Atlantic Ocean, Estremadura and Ribatejo constitute Portugal's heartland, but their central importance goes beyond geography. These fertile lands have formed the backdrop for every major chapter in Portuguese history, from the building of key fortified settlements in the 12th century to the release of Salazar's political prisoners in 1974. Two of medieval Portugal's critical battles for autonomy – against the Moors at Santarém and the Spaniards at Aljubarrota – were fought and won here, and remain commemorated in the magnificent monasteries at Alcobaça and Batalha, both Unesco World Heritage Sites. A third Unesco site, Tomar's Convento de Cristo, was long the stronghold of the Knights Templar.

These days the region draws visitors not only to these renowned monasteries, but also to its vineyards, beaches, castles and historic villages – and Fátima, modern Portugal's premier religious shrine.

Best Places to Eat

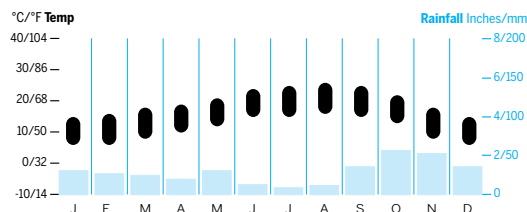
- ➔ Mar à Vista (p268)
- ➔ Estrela do Mar (p287)
- ➔ Restaurante António Padeiro (p282)
- ➔ Casa Pires (p280)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Casa das Marés (p270)
- ➔ Casa d'Óbidos (p273)
- ➔ Challet Fonte Nova (p282)
- ➔ Blue Buddha Beachhouse (p267)

When to Go

Leiria



Apr & May Beat summer heat (and crowds) with a springtime visit to the region's World Heritage Sites.

Jun & Sep For warm beaches at cooler prices, visit the coast in early summer or autumn.

Oct World-class waves at Peniche, Ericeira and other prime surf spots.



Estremadura & Ribatejo Highlights

4 Survey the Rio Tejo from the heights of the 12th-century **Castelo de Almourol** (p294).

6 Sail across the **Foz do Arelho** (p275) lagoon at sunset.

9 Feast on the region's best seafood in **Ericeira** (p266).