Off the Beaten Track: Portugal

PONTE DE LIMA
A picturesque Minho town with long riverside walks and river kayaking. Visit on alternate Mondays, when a massive market spreads along the banks.

CITÂNIA DE BRITEIROS
A mysterious fortified village that was the last stronghold of Celtiberians against invading Romans some 2000 years ago.

MATA NACIONAL DO BUÇACO
Surrounding a palace-turned-upscale-hotel, this rambling forest is dotted with ponds, fountains and crumbling ruins. The spa town of Luso is just downhill.

PIÓDÃO
Perched along the edge of a valley, this picturesque stone village offers a window into old-world Portugal – until 1970, the only way here was on foot.

SERPA
Famed for its sheep’s cheese, Serpa has several curious museums (including one dedicated to timepieces), but it’s the traditional Alentejo cooking that is the real draw.

SÃO DOMINGOS
A former mining settlement that became a ghost town when the mine closed in the 1960s.

ALCOUTIM
Home to a castle, a pretty riverside beach and few tourists, this Algarve town is a great place to escape the crowds.

CARRAPATEIRA
Laid-back village near pristine, undeveloped beaches backed by cliffs. It’s a great place to surf or learn the ropes.