

Fabulous

TRAVEL

ALL GO IN THE ALGARVE

The sun-drenched southern tip of Portugal is perfect for a romantic mini-break or family adventure

REFUEL

Nestled in the corner of the Marques de Pombal is Real Cafeteria, where you can enjoy Portuguese pastries, such as the traditional Pastel de Nata, £1, and a slice of fig and almond cake, £1. Later, drop into Sem Espinhas Guardia to sample the bacalhau

THE ROMANTIC ONE



Senior Features Writer Emily Cope jetted off to Vila Real de Santo António with partner Chris.

THE PAD

Beautifully restored to its former glory after years of neglect, Grand House's prime location on the very eastern edge of the Algarve makes it a gem. With 31 rooms, including a library snug, rooftop bar and gorgeous colonial-style dining area, it oozes '20s charm. Come dinner, it's a delicious feast of fine Algarvian delights with a modern twist - think seared Atlantic scallops, £16, and

Alentejo lamb shoulder with broad beans and chestnuts, £23. For dessert, the almond mousse, port wine ice cream and fresh honeycomb platter, £8, is definitely worth the calories. The luxurious yet friendly vibe makes it feel like a (rather fancy) home from home (Grandhousealgarve.com).

EXPLORE

The eastern Algarve is breathtakingly unspoilt. Walk to the Marques de Pombal, a square lined with picturesque orange trees that hosts a market on Sundays. For beach lovers, Praia Verde is around a mile away for a dip in the sea and stroll along the pristine white sand. In the mood for a bit of pampering? Float in the salt

pools at Spa Salino before slathering yourself in mud that dries in the sun, entry £11. Night owls will enjoy Grand House's Beach Club, where you can show off your dance moves while enjoying a peach and basil Moscow Mule, £12.



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gralhado - fresh, grilled and salted cod, £15, and a bottle of local white wine, £12 (Semespinhas.net). If you have room left for dessert, ice cream parlour O Arco's custard tart flavour is unmissable at £2.

DON'T MISS

With Spain a stone's throw away, hop on a water bus, £1.50, from Vila Real's marina for the 10-minute journey across the river to the small Spanish town of Ayamonte (Baixoguadiana.com). Enjoy a walk through the winding streets before fuelling up on authentic tapas at La Lola in the town square. Patatas bravas, £2, and Iberico ham, £2.50, washed down with a Cruzcampo beer, £1, is muy, muy bien. Boats depart every half an hour.

BOOK IT

A double room at Grand House costs from £180 a night (Grandhousealgarve.com). Fly from the UK to Faro from £30 each way with Ryanair (Ryanair.com) and EasyJet (Easyjet.com). The hotel is a 30-minute drive - a local taxi costs around £50.

THE FAMILY ONE



Writer Robin McKelvie, wife Jenny and kids Tara and Emma embraced the wild in Aqua Ventura.

THE PAD

Think *Swallows And Amazons*, going gloriously off-grid and getting in touch with nature and you'll have a fair idea of what Aqua Ventura is about. You'll stay in well-equipped cottages that lie sprinkled across a hillside a few kilometres inland from Sagres, a coastal town in the Algarve's far west. The hospitable owners - South African Jonathan and his Spanish wife Violeta - created this 150-acre oasis themselves, and no two abodes are the same. Much of life here focuses around the old finca - or ranch - where you're warmly greeted on arrival.



EXPLORE

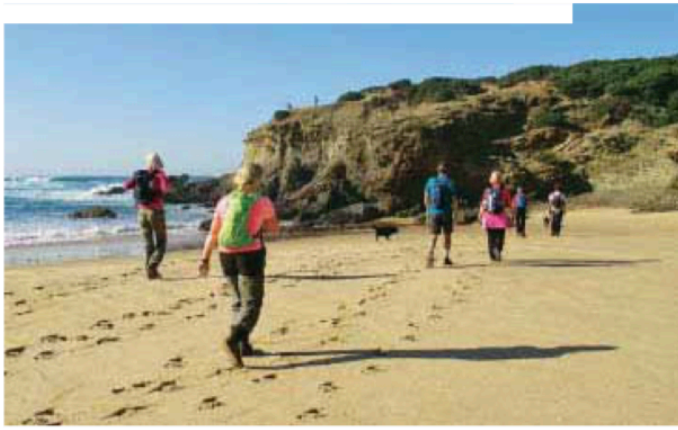
On site, the swaying hammocks are perfect resting places, plus there's a swing rig fashioned from old pallets with multi-levels for little daredevils. Onsite, there's also climbing, archery and sea kayaking so kids big and small can have fun together. In the days before Columbus when the world was thought to be flat, explorers called this area "the end of the world" and there's still a feeling of remoteness and adventure to the location. Nearby, there are a whole host of activities you can try, such as mountain biking, hiking and body boarding sessions at the gorgeous local beaches. We fell off the boards, got back on, laughed, then did it all again.

Photography: Getty Images

REFUEL

Recharging your body as well as your mind is big on the agenda, and healthy food cooked by Violeta and her staff is included in your stay. Expect dishes bursting with local produce such as seafood paella, colourful salads and desserts including a lip-smacking chocolate cake. Wash it all down with delicious local wines. Meals are enjoyed on a large communal outdoor table overlooking the vast countryside, and you'll be wowed by the epic sunsets - perfect for Insta-lovers.





DON'T MISS

Still after more adventures? Then English guide Ally is your man! Not only is he brilliant with kids (ours followed him around Pied-Piper-style), but he will also organise family-friendly local excursions. We all loved our trip to the nearby lake for a cooling dip followed by marshmallow roasting over the campfire, as well as an atmospheric night walk without torches. *✂*

BOOK IT

Seven nights cost from £660 per adult and £575 per child including all meals and activities (Aqua-ventura.com). Transfers from Faro airport take 90 minutes and are included. Fly from the UK from £30 each way with Ryanair (Ryanair.com).

