



Red Transfronteriza de Ciclosenderos
España-Portugal
Zona Sur
—
Rede Transfronteiriça Ciclo Pedestre
Espanha-Portugal
Zona Sul

TOURIST GUIDE



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The CICLOSEND_SUR Project

The main objective of the cross-border European cooperation project INTERREG POCTEP CICLOSEND_SUR is to create opportunities for wealth and employment on the basis of promoting cycle tourism and hiking along the southern border between Spain and Portugal. The project boasts an investment of 7.8 million euros.

Therefore, the aim of CICLOSEND_SUR is to identify a cross-border network of routes for non-motorised vehicles and to propose an Action Plan for its extension and improvement by 2030.

It also aims to fulfil the most relevant requirements of cycle paths and offer some of the essential services, promoting conservation, revitalisation and socio-economic enhancement of the region, involving local business in this sustainable tourism offering.



The Cross-Border Network of Cycle Paths Spain-Portugal South Zone

The Cross-Border Network of Cycle Paths Spain-Portugal South Zone covers the area around the southern border between Spain and Portugal, also known colloquially as “La Raya” or “La Raia”. This region, largely characterised by the course of the Guadiana river, also includes a large area of influence on both sides of the river course that presents points of continuity, in terms of both landscape and culture.



LEYEND:

	Area of Influence
	Cross-Border Area
	Border
	Town
	EuroVelo 1 Route



This is a large area on both sides of the Guadiana river, which comprises part of the Andalusian provinces of Huelva and Seville as well as Badajoz and Cáceres in Extremadura, all on the Spanish side. The Algarve and Alentejo are the two Portuguese regions involved in this Cross-Border Network of Cycle Paths.

The scope of action is limited by the Atlantic Ocean to the south, the Tagus International Natural Park and the Villuercas-Ibores-Jara Geopark to the north, the Vía de la Plata corridor to the east and the provinces of Beja and Faro to the west.



There are three different landscape areas or zones, the Atlantic Coast and the lower course of the Guadiana river, the pastures of Huelva and Alentejo and the large bodies of water formed by the Alqueva- Tagua International axis.

The cycle path offering within the Cross-Border Network is vast and looks to showcase the existing network, which is overlooked by tourists in some cases despite its enormous recreational potential, based on both its level of conservation and the numerous attractions it offers.



- **1.** The Atlantic Coast and the lower course of the Guadiana river
- **2.** The pastures of Huelva and Alentejo
- **3.** The large bodies of water formed by the Alqueva-Tagus International axis



Firstly, there are numerous routes around this region that can be enjoyed by bike thanks to its cross-border character. These include EuroVelo 1 (Atlantic Coast Route), the Dehesas de Sierra Morena Cycle Route or the future Iberian EuroVelo Route. In addition, this Network largely comprises interesting sections of secondary roads connecting various population areas or points of interest on both sides of the border, acting as border crossing points. Some good examples are those of the provincial roads that link Santa Bárbara de Casa and Paymogo, in the region of Andévalo in the South Zone or those that link the border crossing point of Chanza and the town of Mértola are some of the other branches that create an interesting cycle path network in the Central Zone.

In the North Zone, there is the link between Marvão and the trails of Sierra de São Mamede and Valencia de Alcántara by way of the village of Fontañera. Olivenza is also linked to Elvas by road EX105, and Mourão with Villanueva del Fresno by way of the border crossing point of Posto San Leonardo via roads with little traffic. In addition, there are boat services along the Guadiana connecting piers on both shores (Ayamonte-Vila Real de Santo Antonio, Alcoutim-Sanlúcar del Guadiana, Juromenha- Villareal de Olivenza).

However, the Cross-Border Network offers a significant number of paths on both sides of “La Raia” such as the Coastal Ecovia, Gran Ruta del Guadiana (GR-15) or Vía Algarviana (GR-13) in Portugal or the Guadiana and Tagus Nature Trails on the Spanish side. The Natural Corridor of Cáceres-Badajoz, which links the two Extremadura capitals, is also interesting.



Visitors will be able to use the five routes to reach numerous attractions in this vast cross-border region. Major landscapes such as those offered by the Natural Protected Areas of the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche Natural Park, the Valley of Gadiana Natural Park or the cross-border areas of Alqueva Reservoir Park and the Tagus-Tejo International Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve.

Rich gastronomy born from the border culture, much like a lot of the cuisine of the Iberian Peninsula. From a marked border, changing over time, and then diffuse, which has left behind dishes such as migas from Extremadura, fish soup from Alentejo or the more traditional log from “La Raya”.

There are numerous notable attractive monuments, with a myriad of small, fortified towns such as Serpa, Aroche, Marvão, Alcútem, Sanlúcar de Gadiana, Olivenza or Monsaraz, where time seems to have stopped.

There are specific services for cyclists throughout the Network’s territory, from south to north, with a greater concentration in the coastal and northern regions, always around the major population centres such as Ayamonte, Badajoz, Elvas or Mértola, as well as a wide range of quality accommodation and restaurants for an unforgettable experience for everyone who loves History, vast natural spaces and cycling or walking during their holiday.



CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

1. The Atlantic Coast and the Guadiana River:

A Heart between Two Borders





LEYEND:

	Network Area
	Border
	Guadiana Nature Trail
	EuroVelo 1 Route
	Grande Rota do Guadiana
	Town
	Tourist Attractions
	Border Crossing Points



Two main elements give this area of interest its character: the influence of the Atlantic, added to the power and joy of the Guadiana river, make up a landscape characterised by water, salt, wind and sand. Ocean currents have been shaping the river sands, creating some of the best beaches on the Iberian Peninsula, such as Isla Cristina and Isla Canela in Huelva or Montegordo and Cachelha Velha in Portugal, in the Algarve region.

Here, on both sides of the Guadiana estuary, these beaches also take the form of stylised islands, forming sandbars of extraordinary natural beauty, real paradises for birds. Sandbars such as those of El Rompido, in Huelva, or the archipelago of the Formosa river, in the Portuguese Algarve, offer visitors a range of options, with easy access by sea.

Marshes dotted with estuaries, thousand-year-old salt flats and tidal mills, take the traveller from one shore to the other, through an area that knows no borders, forming a cultural ocean that flows naturally. Here, Castro Marim and Gibraleón act as a point of contact between agricultural culture and seafaring culture, with individual castles that warn the visitor of the value of their surroundings.

From this point and to the north, the kingdom where the sun sets, the Algarve (the west, in Arabic), stretches across fertile lands, where olive groves and Mediterranean mountains are the protagonists.

Alcoutim and Sanlúcar de Guadiana, on the northern border of the Algarve and the region of Andévalo respectively, are the next crossing point moving away from the Atlantic, between the two banks of the Guadiana. Tales of smuggling and brotherhood between these two towns, which are still linked today by water and air (the longest zipline in Europe stretches between both shores), invite visitors to discover the two sides of a homologous reality.

A cereja no bolo é a cidade portuguesa de Tavira e as suas numerosas atrações turísticas. Situada nas margens do rio Gilão, esta bela cidade atlântica, com um passado islâmico, é um dos locais de visita obrigatória quando se viaja pelo Algarve.

As the icing on the cake, there is the Portuguese town of Tavira and its numerous tourist attractions. Located on the banks of the Gilão river, this beautiful Atlantic town with an Islamic past is one of the must-sees when visiting the Algarve.



Cycle paths:

There are various routes to enjoy by bike in this area, due to its cross-border nature, such as the EuroVelo 1 (Atlantic Route) which links both sides of “La Raya”, the Coastal Ecovia and Gran Ruta del Guadiana (GR-15) in Portugal or the Guadiana Nature Trail on the Spanish side.

Vía Algarviana or GR-13, a long-distance pedestrianised cycle path, is another option available to those wanting to discover the area on foot or by bicycle. Along its three hundred kilometres, it connects the Guadiana river, from Alcoutim, with Cape Saint Vincent, at the far south of Portugal, already in the wild Atlantic.

Tourist Attractions:

1. El Pintado Tidal Mill Ecomuseum:

The El Pintado Tidal Mill is surrounded by a unique environment, which is part of the Marismas de Isla Cristina area. This is a large saltwater tidal mill, which has recently been restored, dedicated to milling using the power of the waves to move its milling wheels.

2. Flecha y Marismas del Rompido Natural Area:

The Flecha y Marismas del Rompido Natural Area extends from the mouth of the Piedras river, comprised of a system of marshes and a sand formation of some ten kilometres, parallel to the coast and called a sandbar. On the sandbar, visitors can enjoy kilometres of white sand and the intense blue of the ocean, virgin beaches, marsh landscapes, estuaries and dune systems.

3. Zúñiga Castle:

Zúñiga Castle was built with royal licences from 1417 and 1420 by Pedro de Zúñiga to defend from boats on the River Piedras, and was completed in 1428. It is the best preserved of all the fortresses constructed along the Huelva coastline.

4. Castle of Castro Marim

Built in the 13th century by King Alfonso III, the Castle of Castro Marim boasts an interesting semicircular section of wall, which houses the Old Castle, the Church of Our Lady of the Martyrs and various ruins, including the former Palace of the Governors. This important monument offers visitors an impressive panoramic view of the city and the Guadiana River. Inside the castle, visitors can discover a large collection of archaeological finds, ranging from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages, which bear testimony to the region's history.

5. Riverside Town of Alcoutim:

This small town on the northern border of the Algarve brings calm to the banks of the Guadiana, hoping to be discovered by visitors. In just a few square metres, there are enough attractions to make a visit worthwhile. Its castle, meandering streets and its river link to the nearby Sanlúcar de Guadiana makes it a little "sugar loaf" worth a visit.

6. Historic Centre of Cachelha Velha:

Few places please visitors more than arriving at the viewpoint of this small town's old church which offers a breath-taking view of the Atlantic and the Formosa river. Its historic centre includes a Medieval church, restored in the 16th and 18th centuries, and a 16th-century fortress reconstructed after the 1755 earthquake. The Renaissance doorway on the church's façade deserves a special mention as does the neoclassical altarpiece inside.



1. El Pintado Tidal Mill Ecomuseum



2. Flecha y Marismas del Rompido Natural Area



3. Zúñiga Castle



4. Castle of Castro Marim



5. Riverside Town of Alcoutim



6. Historic Centre of Cacelha Velha

CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

2. The Pastures of Alentejo and Huelva:

The Iberian Forest and the Home of the Lynx







The landscape in this region is characterised by three main physical elements: the permanent presence of the Guadiana which creates a border between Portuguese Alentejo and Huelva, the mining culture linked to the Iberian Pyrite Belt, and the pasture, the heart of this area.

The pasture is probably the most common recognisable element in this region, covering the area between the Huelva mountain range and a good part of the district of Beja, in Portugal.

The pasture is a haven for biodiversity, it has one of the best preserved ecosystems in Europe and is a paradise for the species that inhabit it. Livestock (Iberian pig, Merino sheep, Retinta cattle, etc), wildlife (golden eagle, imperial eagle, otter, wild boar, deer, etc) and invaluable flora; the area is an authentic natural refuge which has not changed for centuries.

The pastureland is a vast green area between Spain and Portugal which is inescapable when walking or cycling along the Cross-Border Network of Cycle Paths. A clear representative example of this rich ecosystem is the Sierra de and Picos de Aroche Natural Park which forms part of the Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO). This is the “home” of the famous Iberian pig which, after spending months feasting on its nutritional pastures and acorns, becomes the award-winning and unique Jubugo Iberian Ham.

Mining, an important resource for decades which is now in recession, has left its mark on the entire Huelva region of Andévalo, in places like Alosno, also the birthplace of the Huelva fandango, or in Puerto de La Laja, a mineral wharf on the banks of the Guadiana, very close to its Portuguese counterpart, Pomarão. The Sao Domingos Mine is another of the enclaves that has filled the void left behind by mining through tourist offerings.

The Valley of Guadiana Natural Park, on the Portuguese side, with natural wonders such as the famous Pulo du Lobo, is also part of the territory of the Iberian lynx, as well as a natural and cultural area with a vast range of attractions, such as the town of Mértola, a monumental enclave that provides a historical nuance to the story of these surroundings.



Cycle paths:

The Guadiana Greenway and the Dehesas de Sierra Morena Cycling Route are the backbone of the area. In addition, in this Central Zone, the Cross-Border Network comprises interesting stretches of secondary roads linking different towns on both sides of the border or points of interest throughout this vast grassland area.

The sections that bridge the two sides of “La Raya” are very interesting, as is the case with the provincial roads that link Santa Bárbara de Casa and Paymogo, in the region of Andévalo, with the cross-border crossing of the same name or those that link Alcoutim with Paymogo through Puebla de Guzmán.

The local traffic-free roads that link the border crossing point of Chanza with the town of Mértola is one of the branches of interest to cyclists in this area.

Tourist Attractions:

1. Jabugo Iberian Ham Trail:

There are 31 Huelva municipalities that form part of the Jabugo Protected Designation of Origin, all of them beautiful white villages, located within the boundaries of the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche Natural Park.

2. Andévalo Aniseed Spirit:

Known as a spirit or "manguara" (from the English "man water" linked to the English mining period in Huelva), it has been made in this region since the 18th century, with the towns of Puebla de Guzmán or Alosno being among the main centres for the production of this alcoholic drink known these days as anise and which is made by distilling seeds from the plant of the same name, also known as aniseed.

3. Ribera del Múrtigas Natural Area:

The Ribera del Múrtigas Natural Area is one of the most important of the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche Natural Park. Several streams join together in Encinasola. The Sillo, on the right, and the Valquemado stream on the left, which come together just before reaching the Portuguese border. Then our river continues to neighbouring Portugal, passing near Barrancos, where it will join the Ardila, in the vicinity of Noudar Castle, before joining the Guadiana north of Moura.

4. Mértola Archeological Site:

The city of Mértola is one of the area's must-sees due to its rich heritage, with remains from the Roman, Islamic and Visigoth periods. It also boasts a privileged location very close to the Guadiana and has all the tourist services a visitor could need.

5. Pulo do Lobo:

This waterfall is the most dramatic stretch of the Guadiana, the place where the "river bubbles between very hard walls, the waters roar, strike, hit, ebb and gnaw away, a millimeter per century, per millennium, a nothingness in eternity", as José Saramago wrote.

6. Town of Serpa:

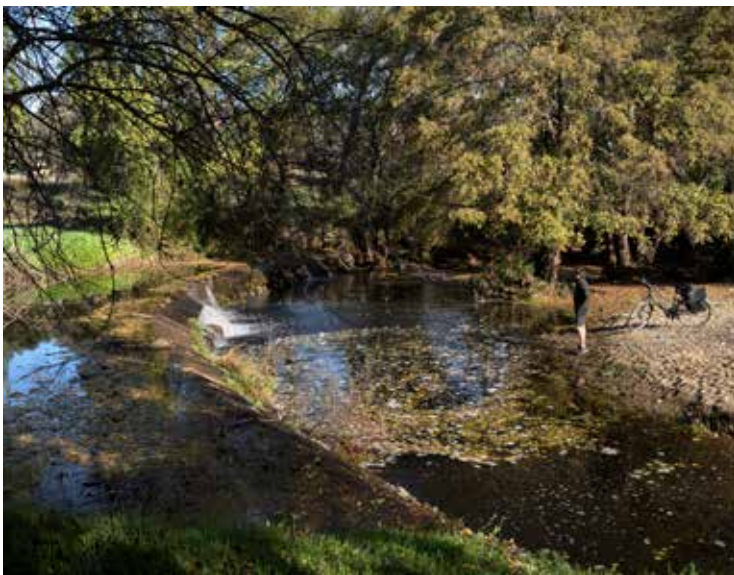
The route to Serpa from the city of Beja is a delightful journey among green pastures, with the visitor's first impression of Serpa being the vast walls of the castle with the doors of Moura and Beja, the only ones of the five original doors to remain. Within the town, the layout of the streets give Serpa a very unique character offering visitors an authentic journey to the past. The chesses produced in this small town, located between the Guadiana and "La Raya", famous throughout Portugal, are another excuse to visit this unique town.



1. Jabugo Iberian Ham Trail



2. Andévalo Aniseed Spirit



3. Ribera del Múrtigas Natural Area



4. Mértola Archaeological Site



5. Pulo do Lobo



6. Town of Serpa

CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

3. From Alqueva to Tagus International: Bridging the Gap





From the cross-border area of Barrancos-Encinasola to the northern limit of the River Tagus as it passes through the province of Cáceres, the Network's territory is marked by two major arteries: the omnipresent Guadiana, which grows larger thanks to the Alqueva Reservoir Park and the Tagus-Tejo International Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO). Both cross-border areas between Spain and Portugal mesh perfectly with the philosophy of the Cross-Border Network, as well as being major tourist attractions due to their natural and cultural assets and the outdoor leisure options.

The mountainous areas of the Serra de São Mamede Natural Park and the Sierra de San Pedro contribute landscape diversity by way of the river valleys of the Tagus and Guadiana.

Marvão, Elvas, Évora, Moura, Olivenza and Alconchel are all walled towns in this area on both sides of "La Raya" and which speak to a past of disputes and protection as well as wealth, noticeable these days thanks to the huge number of exchanges over the last millennium. Elvas is a small and pleasant city, full of monumental heritage, which resulted in its inclusion on the list of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2012, as it is one of the largest and best preserved bastioned fortifications in the world.



Cycle paths:

This area will be the future site of the Iberian EuroVelo, a long-distance route with a cross-border character.

The Cross-Border Network of Cycle Paths Spain-Portugal South Zone includes interesting shorter cross-border connections making use of secondary low-traffic roads and other types of roads suitable for pedestrians and cyclists. A good example is the link between Marvão and the trails of Sierra de São Mamede and Valencia de Alcántara by way of the village of Fontañera. Olivenza is also linked to Elvas by road EX105, and Mourão with Villanueva del Fresno by way of the border crossing point of Posto San Leonardo via two roads with little traffic.

Also interesting are the sections that coincide with the Natural Corridor of Cáceres-Badajoz that connects the two capitals of Extremadura, the design of which is more focused towards pedestrian use.

Tourist Attractions:

1. Técula Mécula:

Técula Mécula is a traditional dessert from the Extremadura region. It is made of almonds, egg yolks, sugar and a puff pastry base. It sometimes contains lard and cinnamon. This dessert is based on an old secret recipe found and recorded in the middle of the 20th century in a famous Olivenza patisserie.

2. Luna Castle:

The castle stands on top of a cliff of the Sierra de San Pedro, overlooking the town of Alburquerque and the region of Los Baldíos. It is one of the most recognisable fortresses of "La Raya" since it is very close to the border with Portugal, halfway between Valencia de Alcántara to the north and the city of Badajoz to the south. The fortress was declared a National Monument in 1924 and a Property of Cultural Interest on 27 November 1933.

3. Alcántara Bridge:

The Roman Alcántara Bridge is considered by many to be the "Best Roman Bridge in the World" and the legend on its lintel says that it will remain standing "As long as the world lasts". In fact, it is still standing despite its size, almost two thousand years after its construction. In 1924, it was declared a Property of Cultural Interest in the Monument category. This bridge has been and is a key link between Vía Norba with the north of Portugal (Beira Alta) with two important arteries on the peninsula: Vía de la Plata and the Lisbon to Braga route.

4. Town of Marvão:

Situated at the highest point of the Sierra de São Mamede, the town and the rugged mountains where it is located have been included on the list of candidates to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000. The beautiful panoramic views offered by Marvão is one of the reasons to visit this small town in Alto Alentejo. Within its walls lies a beautiful collection of popular Alentejo architecture. The narrow streets of Marvão boast an interesting range of Gothic art, Manueline windows, iron balconies and other interesting details characterised by the use of local granite.

5. Amoreira Aqueduct:

This impressive aqueduct, measuring almost eight kilometres long, was declared a National Monument in 1910. It took over 120 years to build and was only completed in the 17th century. With huge cylindrical abutments and various arched floors, the structure is 30 metres high at some points.

6. Medieval Town of Monsaraz:

Situated on the top of a hill that offers fantastic panoramic views is one of the most beautiful towns in Alentejo, offering visitors a beautiful walled town and various megalithic remains of great historical and cultural interest, which have made it into a real "open air museum".



1. Técula Mécula



2. Luna Castle



3. Alcántara Bridge



4. Town of Marvão



5. Amoreira Aqueduct



6. Medieval Town of Monsaraz



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