

MAP OF GREAT LAKE ALQUEVEVA

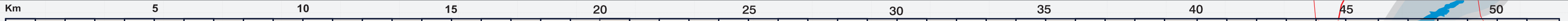
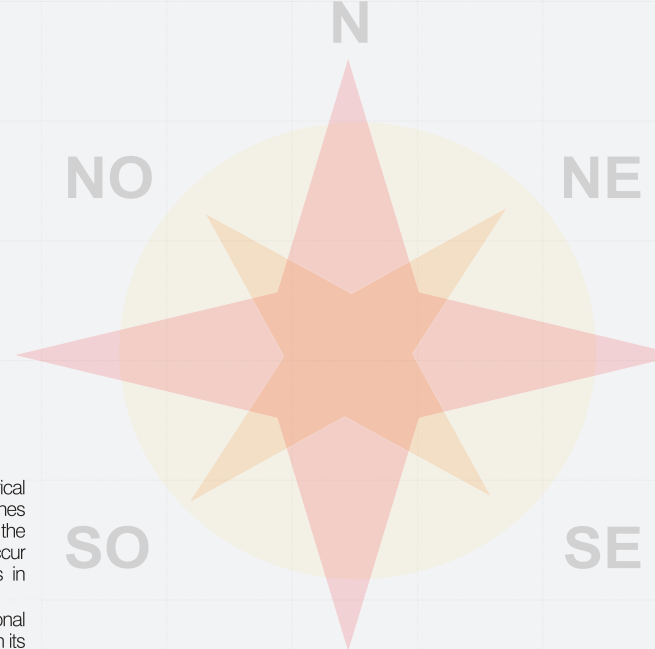


Table with travel distances by water between points of interest:

DISTANCE (Km)	Amieira (village)	Amieira Marina	Barragem Marina	Alqueva (village)	Estrela (village)	Luz (village)	Mourão (village)	Monsaraz (village)	Cheles (bar)	Juromenha (village)
Amieira (village)		5,5	17,4	23,9	31,1	43,1	46,5	55,4	68,5	98,2
Amieira Marina	5,5		11,9	18,4	25,6	37,6	41	49,9	63	92,7
Barragem Marina	17,4	11,9		8	16,7	28,7	32,1	41	54,1	83,8
Alqueva (village)	23,9	18,4	8		19,7	35,2	38,6	47,5	60,6	90,3
Estrela (village)	31,1	25,6	16,7	19,7		16,5	18,9	31,3	44,4	74,1
Luz (village)	43,1	37,6	28,7	35,2	16,5		9,6	18,5	31,6	62,8
Mourão (village)	46,5	41	32,1	38,6	18,9	9,6		13,7	26,8	56,5
Monsaraz (village)	55,4	49,9	41	47,5	31,3	18,5	13,7		26,1	46,2
Cheles (bar)	68,5	63	54,1	60,6	44,4	31,6	26,8	26,1		29,7
Juromenha (village)	98,2	92,7	83,8	90,3	74,1	62,8	56,5	46,2	29,7	

- Gua010
- EM538
- NAVIGATION BUOYS
- ROADS
- ROAD NUMBER
- SUBMERGED MILLS
- LAKESIDE VILLAGES
- DOCK
- PIC NIC AREA



19 Pre-historical Paintings

The estuary of the Alamo is the place where it was found the first pre-historical paintings of the Guadiana Valley. This nucleus of paintings together with the ones of the Rábida and Vales, identified, has in common, beyond the chronology, the geomorphologic particularities of the Guadiana. With effect, the paintings occur more in the accented curves of the river, and where the shale it presents in outcrops with surfaces displayed in table.

For some reason these two circumstances had justified an exceptional concentration of Neolithic art, that only knows parallel on the Tejo River, exactly in its more notable accident, the Fortes do Rábido.

Unlike the Paleolithic rock art, dominated the naturalistic representation of large herbivorous animals - horses and bulls, especially - the paintings of the Neolithic Guadiana focus ways to represent human and geometric schematic drawings.

This thematic, played exclusively on the shale and lacking part of the natural stone scars, shows a mental and cultural changing, resulting from the Neolithic process. Indeed, it is by this that that beginning to emerge as signs of recovery from the man as a creative and autonomous entity, capable of restraining the animals and plants. These signals match, even with the layout of the pictures as mental development of ideographic records, tagged and restricted to the group that designed and, why not, their Community identification's marks.

10 Lousa's Castle

At this location we find submerged, though at little depth, the Lousa Castle. This large and complex architectural structure of Roman origin has been studied over several decades. The latest of these studies was the Plan to Mitigate Impacts on the Archaeological Heritage for the Alqueva Reservoir. As this historical monument is at submergence height, it was necessary to safeguard the integrity of its structure, sealing it beneath a gigantic pyramid of sandbags and concrete. The Lousa Castle, situated on an ancient hard-to-reach spur over the River Guadiana, is a fortified structure with a rectangular plan of 20 by 23 meters. It has walls of schist some 2 meters thick and just one access gate, facing east. This type of fortification, dating from the 1 century BC.

15 Alqueva

An ancient village, documented as far back as 1262 in the list of goods of D. João Peres de Amorim, head steward to D. Afonso III. Focused mainly on agriculture, as expressed in its name, the settlement grew up around the primitive chapel consecrated to S. Lourenço, a Christian martyr much revered in the Alentejo. Besides this church, completely renovated in the XVII and XIX centuries, there is the chapel of Santo Antonio, an example of the architecture popular in the late XVI or early XVII century.

12 The Alqueva Dam

Getting through the hills at Portel was one of the greatest natural obstacles faced by the Guadiana. It was at this point that the rocky mass most resisted the momentum of the river, and this titanic struggle produced a geological scar, opening up a deep valley. It was this natural accident that allowed the construction of a dam, known as Alqueva, in defence to the nearest village.

The first studies to use this spot to build a major hydraulic work that would dam the waters of the Guadiana date back to the nineteen-fifties. A work of this kind would permit, later on, an ambitious irrigation Plan for the Alentejo, an essential condition for overcoming the desertification and economic backwardness of the region.

However, it was only decades later that it was possible to go ahead with the "Alqueva Multi-Purpose Venture". After some coming and going, caused mainly by economic considerations, the project took off in 1998, and the main body of the dam was completed in January 2002. The sluice-gates were closed on February 8 that same year. The wall, with a height of 96 meters, formed an enormous reservoir, with a total surface area of 250 km², and it thus considered the largest artificial lake in Europe.

Among the difference uses for this huge strategic reserve of water, we may highlight: "The Global Irrigation System", which will bring water to 115.000 hectares of land, through 2.000 km of ducts, also the production of electric energy, whose power will be sufficient to cover the consumption needs of the whole district of Beja. Added to these factors, is regularizing the flow of the Guadiana, the public water supply, and the realization of business expectations, particularly in the tourism area.

3 Juromenha

The origins of Juromenha date back to the period of Roman domination. Funerary epigraphic evidence documents the presence of citizens of the Papiria tribe, which allows us to link this region to the geographical and political space of Augusta Emerita. However, it was during the Islamic occupation that Juromenha was transformed into a fortified settlement, especially from the late XI onwards, at the time of the generalized spread of a warlike climate across al-Andalus, caused by internal struggles for power and by the frequent military sorties of the Christian Kingdoms.

From this time we still have the essential of the primitive fortification, set out in thick walls of stucco, strengthened by quadrangular towers. After the definitive Christian conquest, in 1242, by D. Paio Peres Correia, a distinguished Portuguese knight who took part in the taking of Seville, Juromenha took on a leading role in defence of the border and the Guadiana valley.

D. Dinis granted the town a charter and increased the defensive installations of the castle, through the construction of an imposing keep. After centuries of stagnation, the role of Juromenha as a stronghold once again came to the fore in the Wars of Restoration, with the construction of an important bulwarked fortification on a polygonal plan, typical of French Vauban architecture. This fortified complex, consisting of the medieval perimeter and the XVII century bulwarks, although a little bit ruined, is Juromenha's best-known historical monument and its most visible tourist resource for the future.

5 Monsaraz

The fortified town of Monsaraz is built on a rocky spur, looking out over scenery of great natural beauty. The origin of the name is unknown, however mon-xaras "monte-xaras" (mount of rock-rocks), is a poetic image appropriate to the history and charm of the place.

An ancient land of Romans and Arabs, it was the border that raised it to the haughty role of guardian. In 1157, Giraldo the Fearless, conqueror of Évora, took it by assault from the Muslims, who quickly recovered it. Only in 1232 did Monsaraz fall once and for all into the hands of the Portuguese crown, through the military action of the Knights Templars, who became its lords.

The first charter was given by D. Afonso II, setting the boundaries of the primitive medieval area, along with the neighboring lands belonging to the king ("reguengas"), - it was these lands that gave rise to the designation of Reguengos de Monsaraz.

Early in the fourteenth century, Monsaraz passed to the Benefice of the Order of Christ. The keep of the castle and the primitive court building, decorated with the well-known painting "The Good and Bad Judge" date back to this period. In 1412, the town became part of the Royal House of Bragança through a donation from Constable Nuno Álvares Pereira to his grandson D. Fernando, second Duke of Bragança.

In 1512, D. Manuel I granted a new royal charter, an instrument of fiscal and administrative normalization, fundamental for the development of a district. However, the grave population crisis of 1527, caused by the plague, forced the Duke of Bragança D. Jaime to define a division of the communal lands of the district as a way of holding the population, a situation that explains, until today, the scenery of smallholdings around Monsaraz.

8 Moinho do Gato Castle

The small fortified structure, formerly located on a spur close to the mouth of the Azevel River, near to Moinho do Gato, is now visible on the bank of the Alqueva Lake. The structure underwent archaeological excavations as part of the Plan to Mitigate Impacts on the Archaeological Heritage in the Alqueva Reservoir. This study found that its chronology and function would appear to correspond to the type of Castle from the Roman republican period, with parallels in the region, and of which Lousa Castle is the most important example. Construction of these small fortifications, particularly alongside the main watercourses, marks the first stage of possession and defence of the territory by the Roman legions.

Occupation of these places will prove ephemeral, not resisting the administrative reorganization of the empire, and, naturally, the implementation of a productive structure based on exploitation of the land, and not on trading products, based on the Atlantic ports.

6 Xerez's Cromlechs

The Xerez's Cromlechs is a megalithic local composed of 52 menhirs in granite, all lined-up and of a dimension of around 3,5m high and 80 cm in diameter. Its original form is unknown, but its layout is the result of an interpretative reconstruction, carried out a few decades later. Currently, the megalith is relocated next to the Convent of Orada (Monsaraz), due to the creation of the big Alqueva Lake.

17 Torrejona's Dolmen

Close to the bank of the lake, the two Torrejona dolmens are just one of the marks of the regions prehistoric past. They both still show the elemental structure of seven supports that outline a polygonal chamber, opening onto a tiny corridor, heading east. Neither of them has its covering slabs in their original position, in the shape of a hat. There is also little left of the "mamão", - a little hillock of earth and stones that initially covered the whole group.

The dolmens are megalithic burial monuments, built, it would seem, as family tombs. Some of them, like those at Torrejona, were built on more ancient settlements, a practice revealing a relationship of affection for the memories of forbears.

14 Amieira

A village going back a long way, it already appears documented in the XIII century, in the listing of hereditary goods of D. João Peres de Amorim, lord of P. de Amorim, in the distant time the settlement was known as Amieira da Moura, probably due to its proximity to the roadway directly linking Évora to Moura. Among the white cottages, some built of traditional adobe, we may highlight the religious heritage of the chapel of S. Romão and parish church, dedicated to N. Sra. das Neves.

Very isolated until the building of the Alqueva dam, the village still keeps up a rich cultural tradition, expressed in the "cante" music and the traditional poetry of the Alentejo, and not least its unusual cuisine: "hair to the best tradition" game, river fish and products from the hills.

9 Campinho

Belonging to the village of Reguengos de Monsaraz (917 inhabitants), Campinho is also one of the villages bordering the Big Alqueva Lake, being located only a few kilometres from it. On October, 13th 1957, the archbishop D. Manuel Trindade Salgueiro inaugurated the Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus. Around 3 km away from the village, we can also find the small church of São Amador, dating from the beginning of the 18th century.

16 Moncarxa Settlement

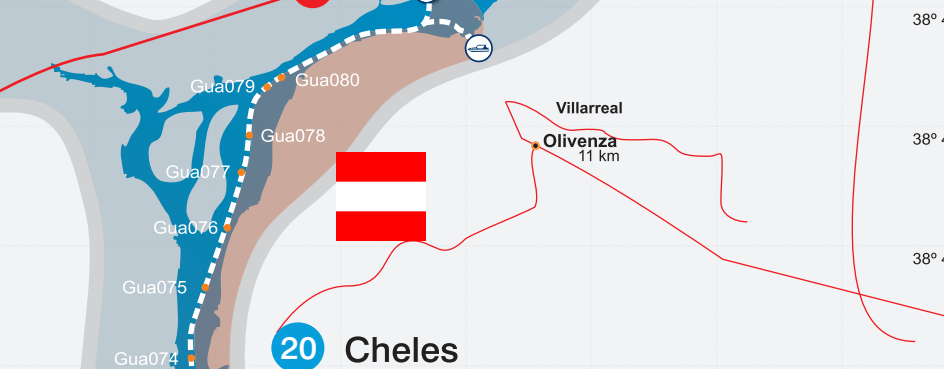
The level of water in the Alqueva Lake gives a smooth and accessible impression to the scarped headland of Moncarxa, which formerly dominated the banks of the River Degebe. In prehistory, a small community was set up there to defend a territory they exploited through an agrarian economy, where grazing, hunting, fishing and gathering played an important role. In this fortified settlement at Moncarxa the first utensils were produced by casting copper, a fact that allows us to date it in the Calcolithic, a period between the III and IV millennium BC. Among the many finds at the site, the well-edged ceramics and jaspoid schist arrowheads stand out.

1 Castro dos Ratinhos

On the left bank of the Guadiana, on the top of the hill overlooking the Alqueva dam, we find Castro dos Ratinhos. Recent archaeological studies date the origin of this fortified settlement to the Late Bronze Age, some 1000 years before Christ.

Seen from a distance, it is possible to make out at least one of the three rings of walls that defended the hilltop. The complex system of walls and a ditch takes in a settled area of some 6 hectares. These fortified settlements were set up at high strategic spots and are characteristic of the Late Bronze Age and First Iron Age. They were governed by military elites who led a warlike and hostile existence, as proven by the stone found for casting swords found here, the only known example on the Iberian Peninsula. Castro dos Ratinhos, like many other known settlements in the central Alentejo, was abandoned close to the time of arrival of the Phoenicians, around the IV century BC.

Juromenha



20 Cheles

Cheles is the Spanish village closest to Grande Lago. Its primitive town center, of Muslim origin, built in the San Blas reliefs, was taken by the Knights Templars in 1231, during the reign of Fernando III of Castile.

While never a fortified town, unlike its neighboring strongholds on the Portuguese side, in the XVI century Cheles would see the highest point of its urban development, thanks to the action of the Manuel Vilela family, owners of the land. Construction of the church of N. Sa. da Conceição, the outstanding religious structure in Cheles, dates back to this period.

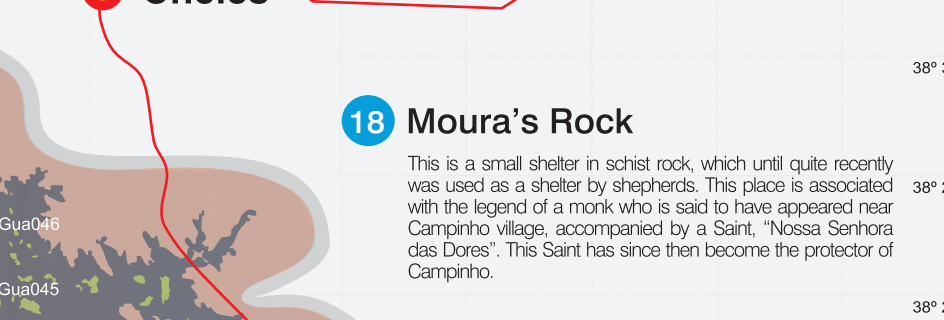
In the eighteenth century, following the border conflicts of the War of Restoration, Cheles was depopulated, and subsequently resettled with a large number of Portuguese families from the border.

Its closeness to the Guadiana is particularly reflected in its gastronomic specialties, based on preparation of fish from the river, as in the case of the "Peixe" and "Encaspado de Peixe".

4 Mourão

The medieval village of Mourão reflects its Muslim past in its name: Maumun or Moim are phonetic adaptations of the late Latin maurorum, meaning "of the Moors". Even though in ancient Spanish moim also means "horse", this fact does not contradict the historical essence of this "land of Moors", taken by Christian knights using the sword. The re-founding of the border outpost is due to Gonçalo Viegas, Prior of the Order of the Hospital, who gave the place its first charter, confirmed by D. Dinis in 1296. In Mourão's city landscape the castle and keep stand out - a work concluded in the reign of D. Afonso IV. Inside the walled structure, built with a curious mixture of schist, marble and granite, we find the remains of the Guard House and the primitive Palace of the Council. This medieval fortification, built with vertical ribs for defense against missile weapons, was followed by the sixteenth century building, this one with inclined planes, imposed by the use of firearms. It was designed with bulwarks and demilunes, following the models of French military architecture, seeking to contain the Spanish offensive in the period of the Wars of Restoration. Guardian of national independence, the village of Mourão shows visitors the scars of that combat on the borders of Portuguese territory. We may say that this historical heritage, accompanied by the serenity of the white cottages spreading out from the Praça da República square, is one of the hallmarks of this borderland.

20 Cheles



18 Moura's Rock

This is a small shelter in schist rock, which until quite recently was used as a shelter by shepherds. This place is associated with the legend of a monk who is said to have appeared near Campinho village, accompanied by a Saint, "Nossa Senhora das Dores". This Saint has since then become the protector of Campinho.

7 Aldeia da Luz

Aldeia da Luz is Portugal's most recent settlement, born of the need to re-house some 373 inhabitants who lived in the former Aldeia da Luz village, now submerged by the Alqueva waters. Planned according to the cultural standards of the region, and respecting the background of the home of each inhabitant, the new Aldeia da Luz is a model project in the application and safeguarding of community values.

Tradition and modernity live side-by-side in the streets with white garden walls, chimneys hiding an open hearth, alleys, backyards and neighborhoods that have not been lost, and also the new parish church of N. Sra. da Luz. The union of these values is now best represented by the Museu da Luz, a remarkable museum project that has won international awards. Inside, the visitor has the chance to feel the multi-century dialog of these people's memory and very identity, inhabitants of the Alentejo, the riverside and the border, all at the same time.

11 Estrela

Estrela is nowadays a waterside village as a result of the rise of the Alqueva waters. It has some 125 inhabitants and belongs to the parish of Povoa de S. Miguel, district of Moura.

It has not known an historical past as rich as other neighboring locations, and thus its architecture consists basically of villagers' houses, dominated by the usual parish church. A place of simple and welcoming folk, its rich and traditional cuisine is one of its main attractions.

The age of places tends to be reflected in their names. If this is not the case, obviously, of the village of Estrela, this cannot be said of the streams close to it - Alcarache and Zebro.

The Alcarache stream is a tributary of the Guadiana, and its name finds its origin in peninsular Arab, as in fact do the majority of watercourses in the south of the country. Curious, though, is the designation of Zebro, which must have its origin in the name of the animal of the equidians (equus asinus), related to the domestic donkey, documented in medieval records, as for example in the charters of Évora and Portel. There is also a reproduction of one printed on a fragment of carving found in Silves castle. This "mountain ass", as an ancient document calls it, disappeared around the XV century.

13 Pomba's Rock

The escarpment overlooking the right bank of the Guadiana nowadays known as Rocha da Pomba conserves, in this former name and in the stone mark still visible, the memory of the legacy of D. João Peres de Amorim, lord of Portel and founder of its primitive castle.

This nobleman, born in Minho, from Abóim de Nóbrega, occupied the posts of governor of the Algarve and chief steward during the reign of Afonso III. In the second half of the thirteenth century, he obtained a royal grant of land of such a size that it still sets the present-day boundaries of the district of Portel.

At this location, then known as Pena de Avanto, the officers of the districts of Évora and Monsaraz placed the first of ten marks of ownership, in 1265.

The line thus drawn along the River Degebe towards Monte do Trigo expanded towards the north the area of primitive demarcation of 1265.

2 Mills at Porto de Évora

For centuries, the water of the River Guadiana and its main tributaries was harnessed as a driving force for mills and fulling-mills. Just like windmills, watermills were also used in grinding cereals, particularly wheat, whose flour provided (and still does) the best bread in the Alentejo. Now submerged, these mills were wisely sited at places where the river allowed the construction of small dams. The water thus held back, and available for longer periods of time, allowed the miller to control its flow through small canals, known as "levadas", until finally turning the millstone. In building the mill and the structures for contentment and transport, only local stone was used, almost always schist, shaped with knives to better resist the strength of the water in the transfer winters.

It was at the confluence of the Degebe with the Guadiana, at Porto de Évora, that the last mill in the region went on working, in a depression known as "Barranco de Amieira". Its miller, following an age-old tradition of subsistence, did not spend all his time on milling cereals; he was also a fisherman, and whenever necessary boatman, as in the past boats the only available means of crossing the river.