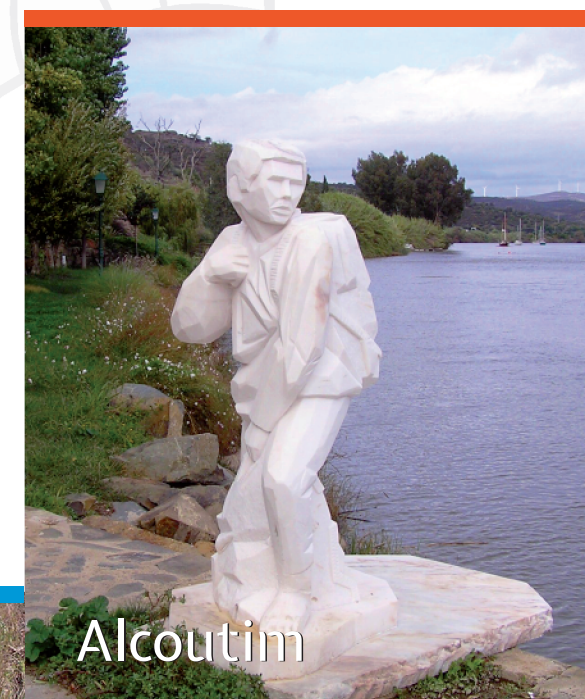


Rota do
Contrabandista

Rota das
Árvores Monumentais

Rota da
Geologia

Rota da
Água



Alcoutim



Preface

In order to increase the attractiveness of Via Algarviana (GR13) there were created new products and infrastructures to enrich this Long Distance Path! One of those products was the creation of a set of 4 thematic Routes distributed by 3 Municipalities partners:

- Rota do Contrabandista (Alcoutim)
- Rota da Água (Loulé)
- Rota das Árvores Monumentais (Monchique)
- Rota da Geologia (Monchique)

The themes and the municipalities in question were not randomly selectect, as they are full in harmony! This is a way to increase the diversity of Via Algarviana, allowing people with very specific interests or just plain curious to move to these places and travel the routes that we propose, some on foot, others on mountain bike or even by car.

For each Route there is a Digital Guide, which can be downloaded for free, to help you and to find out more information along each Thematic Route!

Dare to discover the complementary offerings we have for you!
Enjoy all that the Inland Algarve has at your disposal!

Signalling



- Colour / Symbolic element
- Logo /Name of the Route
- Logo of Via Algarviana

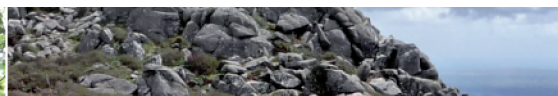




Fig.1 - Smuggler and fiscal guard. Tile panel placed at the entrance of Alcoutim.

INTRODUCTION

While smuggling activities between Portugal and Spain were generally thought to be easier in "the dry stripe" areas, poverty and a lack of other opportunities also led the inhabitants of Alcoutim to turn to this illegal trade of goods. "Smuggling took place along the entire stretch of the river, where the mountain range muleteer paths ended"¹, but the border had to be crossed by boat or simply by swimming. To avoid this practice, at the end of the nineteenth century the government built a comprehensive network of Fiscal Guard surveillance posts that stretched along the entire right-hand bank of the Guadiana river, and which were matched on the opposite bank by Civil Guard posts.

One would expect the difficulties and risks intrinsic to the practice of smuggling in an area with permanent surveillance to have resulted in countless more or less serious episodes throughout the times. However, this was not the case, at least on the Portuguese side of the border. In a land where everyone knew each other, it is not surprising that guards and smugglers lived side by side, and sometimes were part of the same family. In fact, people say that up to six o'clock in the afternoon you would frequently see them mingling in the taverns while having a wine or something to eat. After that time of the day they would bid farewell and they would remark: "Now everyone to their post and let's get to work."².

This "diplomatic understanding" between men pursuing opposite objectives inspired this trail, which is marked by some aspects relating to smuggling in Alcoutim but also to the presence of the Fiscal Guard in the same territory. As a complement, we are going to propose two small trails that allow you to explore and imagine both activities.

1. SMUGGLING

Smuggling on the border between Portugal and Spain began in the thirteenth century after the more or less final demarcation of the border between the two countries. Beginning in the fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century, groups of African slaves were taken through Alcoutim from the ports of the Algarve and brought across the border by Spanish traffickers who failed to pay the corresponding taxes. In the sixteenth century, there was mostly smuggling of livestock, an activity that has continued up to almost the present time. But the poverty on both sides of the Guadiana led smugglers to carry anything that could increase the small income they earned by working the land.

On a good night they could bring in the same amount as the wages paid for two months working in the fields. However, due to the hardships and underlying danger involved, people chose to smuggle only seasonally or even on more isolated occasions. Many smugglers had other occupations in the fields of agriculture, grazing or in the mines, and besides it was humanly impossible to endure endless nights with such heavy bags on their backs. Most were between 20 and 30 years old, but some people made smuggling their profession until they reached an advanced age.



Fig.2 - Statue of a smuggler in the Old Jetty of Alcoutim.

Although smuggling used to be a solitary or family activity, after the installation of GF posts along the river in the nineteenth century and due to the increased surveillance, much more cautious smuggling schemes began to be developed. "Gangs" of organized groups of men hired by Portuguese and Spanish suppliers began to be formed. Traders from local or more distant areas hired the leader of the gang ("trafficker") who then readied a

more or less numerous group of transporters ("charters"), who finally delivered the goods to buyers who were equally committed in this network. These men only had knowledge of the time and place at which the goods were to be loaded and of the places where they were to meet in the event that they were separated, and were only informed of their final destination shortly before their departure. This was to prevent the betrayal of the others involved by those who were caught by the guards. Traffickers took the greatest risks since they were the ones who first had to find routes and watch the movements of the patrols, but they were also the ones who earned the most, sometimes more than 700 escudos per load, the equivalent of the monthly salary of a guard. Many ended up becoming traders themselves. The charterers earned about 20 escudos per load and night⁹.

On the way to the river, the smugglers obviously avoided the fiscal guard posts, which was not easy because in some cases there was a distance of only a little over a kilometer between these posts. The situation in Spain was different, because the civil guard posts were spread more far apart (Canaveral, Puerto de la Laja, Sanlúcar, Cumbres de San Blas, Puerto Carbón, Marcia Redonda) but they organized frequent patrols along the river. Smugglers chose very dark or stormy nights and never used the same path more than once, which at that time was relatively more viable since the mountains were clearer and less covered in scrub. Closer to the Guadiana River, they opted for the gullies that took them directly to the banks of the river and where they could more easily go unnoticed.

The cargo was usually transported on their backs, in bags that weighed 30 and sometimes up to 50 kilos, hung by ropes or straps. If a trip lasted more than one night, the men hid the load between the bushes at dawn and then waited for sunset on the closest mountain peaks, so as to be able to monitor the movements of the guards. In the event that they were caught by a patrol, the rule was for the smugglers to rid themselves of their load at the first warning shot and then to flee on their own since they knew that rather than apprehending any of them, what the guards really wanted was to apprehend the goods. Guards could then take advantage of their find and rarely refrained from keeping part of the booty for themselves. Curiously, the seized property was often sold at public auctions to the same merchants who worked with the smuggled goods¹¹.

There were also cases of both Portuguese and Spanish guards who were previously bribed to let smugglers by or to inform them of the areas to be patrolled on a particular night. In Spain, the price for this "service" was



a peseta per kilo, but in Portugal the price was up to four escudos per kilo of goods¹⁰.

Smugglers crossed the river by boat relying on the complicity of some fisherman, or otherwise swam. In this case, the goods were placed in a bag which had previously been waterproofed with linseed oil and tied with a strong rope. The bag, which sometimes weighed more than a hundred kilos, was then secured to a buoy, basket or raft, in such a way that it could float. Two or three men then jumped in the water and swam to the opposite side while holding on to the rope¹⁰.

In the case of organized smuggling there were always favored goods which varied over time. This activity was at its peak between the years 1930 to 1960, and especially during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The goods smuggled out of Portugal included coffee, sugar, eggs, rice, soap, flour, bread, figs, wool and tobacco, and their final destination was nearby towns, such as El Granado o Villanueva de los Castillejos, as well as much more distant locations such as Valverde del Camino or Huelva. The goods from Spain included corduroy (a fabric not then produced in Portugal), soaps, perfumes, fine apparel, clothes, cognac and almond filling, which was delivered to local merchants (Lagos, Giões, Martinlongo) or to intermediaries⁸.

Contrary to what one might think, smuggling was not exclusive to men. Many women also engaged in such activities and, at times, they were able to use their charm to make guards turn a blind eye, perhaps in the hope of getting something more. Andalusian women are remembered for regularly traveling to the lands of Mertola and Alcoutim with fabrics and haberdashery tied to their waist and then returning "much fatter", with kilos of coffee beans hidden between their breasts or around their belly. Then, there were also the maidens of Alcoutim who always hid something of value under their clothing on their return from the feasts of Sanlúcar. When they raised the guards' suspicions, they were physically searched in the barracks by female customs officers, who were known as the "feeling ladies"².

2. FISCAL GUARD

Just after the signing in 1297 of the Alcanizes Treaty (Portuguese: Tratado de Alcanizes), which defined the border between Portugal and Spain, the need arose to control the trade between the two Iberian nations. For this purpose the "alcaides das sacas", were engaged as the first fiscal agents of the king responsible for preventing fraudulent trade across the kingdom's borders. The customs agency of Alcoutim already existed in the fifteenth century, with its bailiffs and guards. However, the first specialized military corps did not emerge until 1801, when the Royal Guard was created, and included soldiers assigned to monitor "off path routes and smuggling". In 1862, the Corps of Custom Guards of Dry Ports was created, which was the origin of the Guard, founded in 1885.

With the entry of Portugal in the European Union and the enactment in 1992 of the Agreement on the Freedom of Movement of Persons, Goods and Services, the land border lost the importance it had had for centuries. In 1993 the GF was eliminated and was integrated into the Fiscal Brigade of the National Republican Guard.

From the date on which it was established in Alcoutim, the young people of the town began to see the GF as an attractive alternative. It enabled them to escape hard and unprofitable work in the fields, and while gaining the security of earning a smaller but steadier income as a soldier, and also providing them the opportunity to have a highly desired retirement later in their life¹.

But it was never an easy life for the "picachouriços", the nickname for the members of the GF which made reference to the long and pointed rods they used to check whether smuggled goods were being camouflaged in sacks of bulk goods³. Working conditions in the posts, particularly those further away from the populated areas, were often very precarious due to the low quality of the facilities, isolation and difficulty of access.



Fig.3 - Old barracks of the Fiscal Guard of Alcoutim and detail of a statue of a guard.

During the Spanish Civil War and the period of illegal emigration before 1974, conflicts of conscience arose frequently in the minds of these men who often turned a blind eye or even actively helped anyone who wanted to cross the line for political reasons or simply in search of a better life.

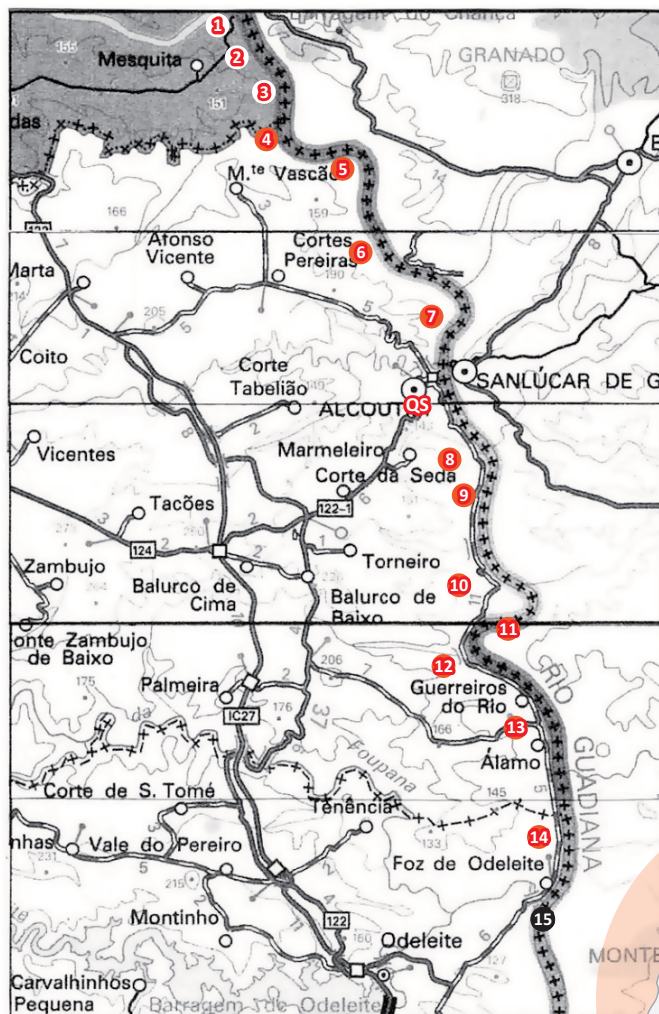
As for smuggling, and contrary to what happened in the case of the "policemen" on the Spanish side of the border, the actions of the GF rarely had dire consequences, and were usually resolved with a few shots in the air and the scattering of the smugglers, who commonly left their goods behind. One of the unwritten rules, which was obviously not stipulated in any regulation, but was in some cases transmitted to the newly recruited guards, was that "here, no one fires to kill for smuggling, because there are no goods that are the worth the life of a person"⁴.

However, as always, there were exceptions, especially during the Spanish Civil War when many Republican political fugitives were caught by the guards and delivered to the policemen in Sanlúcar, for fear of reprisals from above, and were later shot. The cases of death of smugglers were almost always perpetrated by guards who were outsiders that been uprooted and were annoyed, and might even have been sent there as a punishment for disciplinary reasons. A well-known case in Moreanes (Mértola) related to a guard from the Algarve mountain range who would always claim that he had to kill some smuggler "to get out of here" whenever he drank too much, and in the end that is what he ended up doing⁸.

Perhaps due to the fact that the "enemy" in this war was almost always a poor and desperate person who just wanted to feed his family, the old guards had a general feeling of "hidden shame", often disguised behind their corporate pride and the apology of "simply doing their job". That explains why there was a shortage of testimonies from this side of the "barricade" in many studies on smuggling and the disappearance, which was said to have been ordered from above, of a large part of the records of the old GF.

The village of Alcoutim was headquarters of a Section which reported to the Company located in Vila Real de Santo Antonio and Battalion No. 2 with a command post in Evora. This section was responsible for 15 check posts throughout the day, including some located in the towns bordering Mertola and Castro Marim, as can be observed in map 1. In the early 70, the vast majority of the posts were still operative but, little by little, they began to be eliminated and the buildings were put on sale¹.

The municipality of Alcoutim had twelve guard posts, including the main barracks located in the town. Each post had three or four guards, led by a sergeant.



Key:

- QS Barracks of Alcoutim
- 1 Palanqueira (Mértola)
- 2 Canavial (Mértola)
- 3 Barranco do Álamo (Mértola)
- 4 Vascão (Alcoutim)
- 5 Enxoval (Alcoutim)
- 6 Premedeiros (Alcoutim)
- 7 Lourinhã (Alcoutim)
- 8 Alcaçarinho (Alcoutim)
- 9 Abrigo Segundo (Alcoutim)
- 10 Grandacinha (Alcoutim)
- 11 Pontal (Alcoutim)
- 12 Montinho das Laranjeiras (Alcoutim)
- 13 Guerreiros do Rio (Alcoutim)
- 14 Barranco das Pereiras (Alcoutim)
- 15 Foz de Odeleite (C. Marim)

Map 1 - Fiscal Guard posts in the region of Alcoutim

2.1 - Vascão

(Height: 35 m. Coordinates: 37°31'27.71" N; 7°30'48.64" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890 1. Located in a high spot of the Guadiana River and the mouth of the Vascão River.

Already abandoned and very degraded in the 80s, the two buildings on this post began to be restored in the early twenty-first century, as part of a private initiative of rural tourism.

The post is accessible from the village of Cortes Pereiras on the EM 507. About 400 meters to the west, turn onto the paved CM 1054, which continues to the north for 2.5 km, and ends at Monte Vascão. From here, a clay road extends 2.0 km, and is sometimes in poor condition. From the central square of Monte Vascão, follow a street to the right that continues on a path heading north. After 200 meters of houses, there is a junction of four roads. Continue on the road to the right which has a small dam alongside it, and follow the ravine up to the post site.

2.2 - Enxoval

(Height: 30 m. Coordinates: 37°31'18.97" N; 7°29'40.70" W)

Its location borders the town of Puerto de la Laja, a large mining harbor of the Spanish Lower Guadiana. The building is now a private home.

The post is accessible from the village of Cortes Pereiras on the EM 507. About 400 meters to the west, turn onto the paved CM 1054, which continues to the north. After traveling 1 km there is a wide clay path to the right, keep heading forward in a NE direction for approximately 2 km, passing below and to the west of the Enxoval geodetic vertex. Then, at an intersection, ignore the path to the right and continue along the path to the left. After traveling another 1.3 km in the same NE direction, there is another intersection. Take the trail to the left and soon you arrive to the surroundings of the old post.

120 meters from this post, and upriver, the remains of a Roman village and port 5, were found, from which copper and other metals were extracted from the mines in the region.

2.3 - Premedeiros

(Height: 25 m. Coordinates: 37°30'06.25" N; 7°29'18.90" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890¹. It is in a slightly elevated location, very close to the river. The building is now part of a private home.

This post is accessible from the village of Cortes Pereiras on the EM 507. After entering the village, go along the streets that pass through four of its main districts (Monte Longo, Casa da Amêndoa, Monte de Baixo, Monte de Cima). After reaching the northern part of Monte de Cima, turn onto the asphalt road to the right which runs alongside the Mine House and then continue east. After 2.5 km you reach the shore of the river where Premedeiros is located.

The mineral from the copper and antimony mines of Cortes Pereiras was loaded here until the end of the nineteenth century. Later, the small anchorage was used by vessels owned by sailors from Vila Real de Santo Antonio, who came here to exchange fish for land goods⁶.

2.4 - Lourinhã

(Height: 70 m. Coordinates: 37°29'12.11" N; 7°28'08.45" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890 1. It is located on the eastern side of a hill overlooking the width of the river bend just upstream from Alcoutim. The building is abandoned and in ruins.

This post can be accessed from the north of Alcoutim, on the left bank of Ribeira de Cadavais. After the Pousada da Juventude, follow a wide clay road along the river for approx. 600 meters, which runs parallel to the beginning of the GR 13 (Via Algarviana). The road then bends a bit to bypass a small ravine. Then, climb up a path to the left, which is narrow and very steep in some spots, and after about 700 meters, you arrive to the front of the post. The latter route is only recommended for all-terrain vehicles.

As an alternative option, this post can also be visited on foot by following a short hiking trail.

2.5 - Alcoutim

(Height: 15 m. Coordinates: 37°28'14.66" N; 7°28'15.97" W)

The headquarters of the Alcoutim Section of the GF were established in an already existing building which was built in the middle of the sixteenth century and is referenced in eighteenth century documents that make reference to the Houses of the Judge of the Customs Agency. In the twentieth century, the Customs building step also housed



the Forest Guard, which had been located in other basic facilities on the ground floor of the municipality government building as from 1883. Situated opposite the river, at the higher end of Av. Duarte Pacheco, the building has a military architecture, which is simple and functional, and is still in good condition. The Municipal Office of Finance has been established here since 1999.

2.6 - Alcaçarinho

(Height: 40 m. Coordinates: 37°27'30.19" N; 7°27'56.12" W)

It is located on a hillside bordering the river, 1.7 km south of Alcoutim and next to the EM 507. The building has been restored and is now a private home.

It is accessible from the road and is situated at the top of a small pebbled ramp.

2.7 - Abrigo Segundo

(Height: 25 m. Coordinates: 37°26'54.12" N; 7°27'35.67" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890 1. It is located on a hillside bordering the river, 1.7 km south of Alcoutim and next to the EM 507. The building has been restored and is now a private home.

It is accessible from the road and is situated at the top of a small pebbled ramp.

2.8 - Grandacinha

(Height: 35 m. Coordinates: 37°25'49.64" N; 7°27'43.32" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890 1. It is located on a hillside high above the mouth of the Barranco do Vinagre and on the border of the river, 5 km south of Alcoutim and next to the EM 507. The building is abandoned.

It is accessible from the road, climbing up a 100 meter path.

2.9 - Pontal

(Height: 35 m. Coordinates: 37°25'02.91" N; 7°27'04.08" W)

It is located on the southern slope of a small hill that overlooks the large bend of Pontal, which is the sharpest bend of the Guadiana River. The building is abandoned

and in ruins.

It can be accessed from the lookout on the EM 507, located 6.3 km south of Alcoutim. Here, continue straight along an 800 meter clay road running in an upward direction along the bend and then go down the slope until you are close to the bank of the river. Some 350 meters ahead, on the edge of a small ravine covered with olive trees, take a path that cannot be accessed by vehicles. It is not completely visible in the flat area at first but then it runs straight up the hill until you reaching the post.

As an alternative option, this post can also be visited on foot by following a short hiking trail.

2.10 - Montinho das Laranjeiras

(Height: 35 m. Coordinates: 37°24'24.62" N; 7°27'51.35" W)

It is located on the slope to the north at a height which is a bit higher than the village of Montinho das Laranjeiras. The building is abandoned and in ruins.

It is accessible from the EM 507, following the northern road providing entrance into the town. Higher up in front of the first houses, a clay path opens up to the right which passes right under the post. To get there, you have to climb an additional 30 meters up a partly abandoned path.

2.11 - Guerreiros do Rio

(Height: 40 m. Coordinates: 37°23'50.10" N; 7°26'55.27" W)

It is located on the northeast slope, a bit higher than Hotel Guerreiros do Rio. The building is abandoned.

It is accessible from a street that goes up to the hotel, and then a short climb up a path between bushes.

This was the last post to stop being used⁷.

2.12 - Barranco das Pereiras

(Height: 15 m. Coordinates: 37°22'33.55" N; 7°26'26.45" W)

Built by the Ministry of Finance in 1890¹. It is located on a slope bordering the river, right next to the EM 507, approximately 1.5 km south from the village of Álamo. The building is abandoned and in ruins.

It is accessible from the EM 507, at the top of a trail starting close to the small ravine to the south of the post.



3. HIKING TRAILS

3.1 LOURINHA HIKING TRAIL



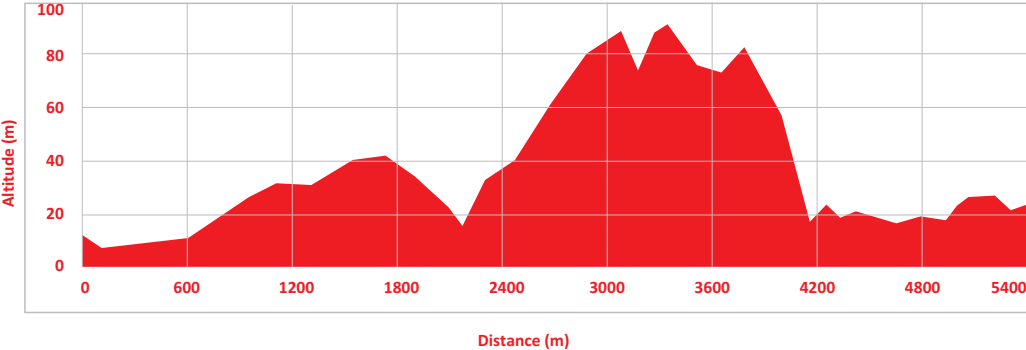
Key:

- 1 Old barracks of the GF
- 2 Statue of the smuggler
- 3 Estalagem da Juventude
- 4 Old Castle
- 5 Lourinha GF Post
- 6 Plains of Lourinha

  Walking Route



Topographic profile of the Walking Route of Lourinhã



- **Type:** First straight and then circular
- **Length:** 5.5 Km
- **Total drop/rise:** 175 m/ 164 m
- **Difficulty:** Medium/Low
- **Duration:** 2:30h
- **Method of travel:** On foot and by mountain bike

Description

The trail starts in the village of Alcoutim along the loading dock and continues along the EM 507 until the Health Center. Then go to the right following the road which is still paved up to Pousada da Juventude. Then, take the clay road which is almost always parallel to the Guadiana River. The initial part of the trail runs parallel to the GR 13 (Via Algarviana). After the Barranco do Brejo, exit the GR 13 and continue up a hill to the left until you reach the Lourinha fiscal guard post. Throughout the ascent, there are beautiful panoramic views of the river and the San Marcos Castle, above Sanlúcar.



Fig. 4 - Old Lourinha Fiscal Guard post

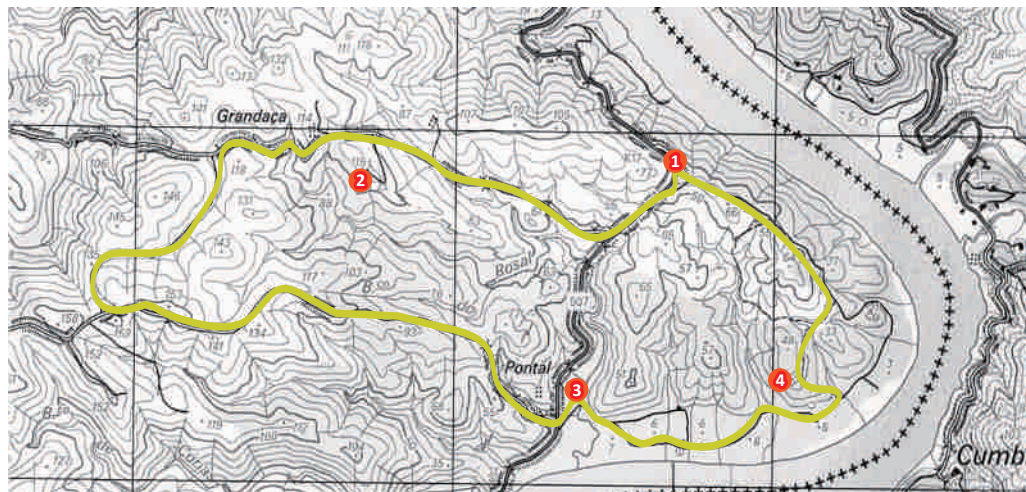
From the post, continue upward leaving the river behind you and entering a typical mountain range. After several ascents and descents, the trail runs parallel to Via Algarviana once again, but only for a few hundred meters. Go down the side of the small ravine until you reach the plains of the Guadiana River. The path continues through the orchards and large olive trees. A little further ahead is the GR13, which some will take back to Alcoutim.



Fig. 5 - Landscape of the Lourinha hiking trail



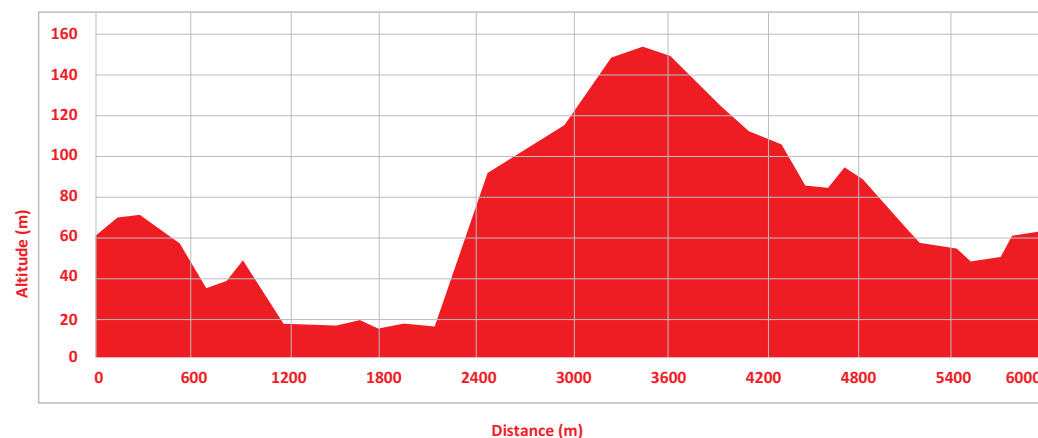
3.2 PONTAL HIKING TRAIL



Key:

- 1 Viewpoint
 - 3 Barranco do Rosal (ford)
 - 2 Antenna
 - 4 Pontal GF Post
- hiker Walking Route

Topographic profile of the Walking Route of Pontal



- **Type:** Circular
- **Length:** 6.0 Km
- **Total drop/rise:** 193 m/182 m
- **Difficulty:** Medium
- **Duration:** 3 Hours
- **Method of travel:** On foot and by mountain bike

Description:

This trail starts at the Pontal viewpoint (between Alcoutim and Guerreiros do Rio) next to the EM 507, partially running parallel to the PR 2 "Slopes of Pontal". Head through the bushes and holm oaks with the Guadiana River to your left. Shortly after descending, leave the PR 2 that continues downward and turn right onto a wide path width gets narrower until you reach the Pontal fiscal guard post.

Near the abandoned village of Grandaça an old well fed by the mouth of the river can be seen. Continue downward until you reach the EM 507. Take this road for about 200 meters, and then make a detour to the right which leads to the Pontal viewpoint, which is the starting point of the trail.



Fig. 6 - Old Pontal Fiscal Guard post

Here, there is a wider path that leads down to a small ravine covered with olive trees. Take the PR 2 once again. The trail continues on a clay road, which is fairly close to the river, surrounded by orchards and apple trees, but most predominantly, one of the biggest olive groves in the whole municipality. Finally, cross the ford of the Rosal Ravine and head upwards until you reach the EM 507 once again. After crossing the ford you will come to a clay path which goes upward and is relatively steep, always following the PR 2. The ascent which is covered with rockroses, provides magnificent views of the Guadiana River. After reaching the top, leave the PR 2 and turn right onto a forest path. From this point on, the landscape changes, giving rise to a vast pine forest. Then go down the ravine in between the pine trees until you come to another downward section of the PR 2, which bends to the right.



FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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The digital guide and the coordinate GPS files for the trails are available from the sites::

www.almargem.org

www.cm-alcoutim.pt

www.turismodoalgarve.pt

www.viaalgarviana.org

