



## Ribatejo

### Localisation

All the charm of this rich province awaits you along the banks of the Tagus. The river moulds the character of the area and forges the development of the people.

The unique countryside of the river and meadowland blends at the meeting place of Estremadura and Alentejo, earning Ribatejo the noble title of "Heart of Portugal".

To the north, on the right bank of the Tagus are limestone and clay lands, prolific in olive and fig trees grown in small divisions typifying Roman culture, right up to the entrance of Santarém. To the south, on the left bank of the river, we can imagine the open land, even though its lost to view by large wooded areas or sandy tracts that the Saracen fortified and cultivated.

In the centre, are the meadows and pastures, rich in cereal produce, enúched by the alluvial plains. For centuries this has been home to the most aristocratic Ribatejan resident: the bull, the horse and man.

### Bullfights

Do not believe the old story of the "Last Bullfight in Salvaterra", as it is in Salvaterra de Magos, in the summer months, that you can see a magnificent display, led by horse back riders renowned throughout the bullfighting world. The bullfights in Portugal are very different from those of Spain and South America. In Portugal it is illegal to kill the bull during the fight.

Bullfights in the Ribatejo start with courage and strenght to challenge the buli... animais which are tried and tested in the fields, long before they arrive in the bullring.

In this beautiful area from Ben ent legã and heart of the "brave bull" country lies between Golegã and Azambuja, from the woods to abundantly rich pastores.

We see the novice in the ring, practising for harder tasks which lie ahead, waiting for the bulls, a typical part of Ribatejo Festivals... he has to master the skill to domineer the bull. Then to display in public, the art of horse back riding with great daring. The art which is adored by every local man and woman.

One upon a time, bullfighting in Portugal served as preparation for war. Today, bullfighting is like a final exam, after long years of hard work when the Ribatejan excels himself with audacity, courage, gallantary and chivalry.

Come to see this national spectacle, choosing a Ribatejo bullfing, of course!

### Traditional crafts

Here in the Ribatejo, the visitor will enjoy the innumerable local markets, cathedrals, and a variety of beautiful sights.

Every type of art can be savoured in the Ribatejo, in its own setting, and where the visitor can see for himself endless vine-yards and bull breeding arcas.

The region has many tradicional crafts such as tanneries in Alcanena and textiles in Minde, as well as related industries from the historic past ... ceramics from Golegã and Chamusca, wicker dolls from Constância.

There are ancient skilled arts in the Ribatejo which the visitor will find hard to imagine. In the countryside there is winegrowing and in Alpiarça and Almeirim basketry. Also the ancient art of glass blowing, some of which is straw covered.

Coming again to the plains, admire the charm of the Benavente stockings made from linen, and favoured by the local population. Shepherds, with great patience, carve objects from the cork oak and the ash, whittling time away. If you pass through Coruche, don't forget to visit a leather factory. You will appreciate that the Ribatejans are proud people and it is not only the older members of the community that apply themselves to local arts; you can go to Glória do Ribatejo and see the younger generation embroidering hoods and aprons. Also, in the centre of the town of Santarém, or a little further on in Tremês, see young hands carefully shaping clay for ornaments or objects in daily use. Go



to Benavente or Golegã and actually help in the iron forges.

Here lies one of our secrets, there is still a quality of country life using wicker baskets, water pitchers, sieves for separating the grain from the husk... also tradicional bread and cheese making! Come to Ribatejo and get to know the genuine crafts.

## The Tagus

History can start... there was once a river who has everything. For you, our visitor, travelling upstream or down, the Tagus dominares, and commands all of us living in this land. Along the river, we find the Castelo do Bode Dam which is on the Zêzere near Constância, held waiting for the gates to be opened so it can join the main stream.

It would be a good idea for the visitor to leave his car from time to time, to explore the delights of the surroundings, offering beauty and charm at every tum. Visit Paúl do Boquilobo in Golegã, the remains of Almonda's walls. Almonda - where we find a Natural Reserve, rich in ornithology, the home of many herons, looking for suitable nesting places at the end of every spring.

At one extreme of the province, we find Benavente, on the Tagus estuary, bordering the Natural Reserve, one of the last refuges for migratory birds... flamingos, tailors, ducks, etc.

## The river side

On the Tagus, from Golegã to Salvaterra de Magos; from Constância to Azambuja, there are numerous small coves and beaches where you can bathe, which have been there for generations. Iley each have a special nostalgia for the local people, sometimes being used for picnicking, some for sleeping away a Sunday afternoon and for the braver, jumping into the tiver.

Today it is the city visitor who comes to see us; the spaces are huge; it is peaceful and delightful for children. Make a note during your journey, of the beautiful little beaches and the secluded corners which are a paradise for fishermen. Among others are Praia Doce (Salvaterra de Magos); Patacão de Cima (Alpiarça); Porto do Patacão (Chamusca), or, on the opposite bank of the river, Caneiras (Santarém); Palhota and Valada (Cartaxo) and "Vala Real" (Azambuja).

Motor boat sports take place on the Magos Dam (Salvaterra de Magos), or choose a more relaxing pastime on the weirs of Monte da Barca or Agolada in Coruche. Beautiful open spaces, forests of rare beauty, offer serenity alongside the dam water.

## History

From the Alfageme in Santarém to the now extinct royal palace in Almeirim; from the exile of Camões in Constância, to the woods in Coruche dedicated in song by Gil Vicente - all speak of the Ribatejo's history; the history of Portugal. It is now time to be both the reader and discoverer and live in this history!

Naturally, you will start with the Gothic era; come to Santarém - you will be amazed at the Graça Church façade, or quietly enjoy the simplicity of the interior of the Clara Church. Explore the town, a histodc centre. Pause in front of the Seminary and pass from Gothic to Barroque. Allowing more time, visit the Archaeological Museum of São João de Alporão, containing impressive remains from the times of the Romans, Arabs, etc.

Speaking of museums, how about a contrasting diversion in this unique area! We have two examples; there is the sumptuous Casa dos Patudos Museum and the simple Municipal Museum in Benavente. This then is the wealth of the Ribatejo. Look for the best of our paintings, the richness of the furnishings, the finest carpets. Delight in the charm of the regional costumes; the love with which the cottages are decorated; understand the knowledge still displayed in the old agricultural implements. In this contrast, lives the soul of the Ribatejo; enriching us with as much good taste as the great national political figure - the republican José Relvas with the wisdom and diligence of the local ethnographer Joaquim Paracho. Respectfully, creators of two magestic estates, in Alpiarça and Benavente - much esteemed by the community.

Speaking of museums, we must also admire the other two parishes which we can see, rich in old objects. These are the Cartaxo's Rural and Wine Museum - A living legend on how to preserve the



passing of time! Other themes such as photography and painting belong to Golegã with its supreme Museums of Carlos Relvas and Martins Correia. Names from yesterday and today, bequeathing the best of their work to the land and the people.

### Traditional architecture

People speak of tradicional architecture, blending into local surroundings. So simple and effective in the seventeenth century classic fnanor houses which lie to the north of Santarém! - or the lofty hills in the Ribatcjo farmlaind, eighteenth century bulldngs, all inspire the beauty of the countryside. There is plenty of architecture to see on your journey, much of it fufl of surprfises. Pass through Coruche, stopping at Erra, a white washed world, banded in blue.

Should you prefer the unusual, let us open the window of your imagination and you will see the light in the woods, the simple poles supporting the waterside houses of the river fishermen in Escaroupim (Salvaterra de Magos), in Patação de Cima (Alpiarça), in Caneiras (Santarém) or in Palhotas (Cartaxo).

### The wine

Let us drink to your arrival, raising our Oasses, full of one of the best nectars produced in Portugal. Here, in one of the fertfle áreas of the river Tagus.

Your very good health! Climb to the Portas do Sol and enjoy the view. First you see the white beauty of Almeirim and Alpiarça, exquisitely clad like a debutante at her first ball, lying on the plains of the Ribatejo... As sure as the National Gastronomic Festival which is faithfully celebrated in Santarém each year, at the end of October.

To the south, on the other bank of the Tagus, are the woven gamet tints of Cartaxo, permitting us to continue our "feast"... easfly accomplished in the Ribatejo, a reoon rich in a great variety of natural materiais.

There is the Tagus - the river which produces the dehicious ingredients for the Savel bread soup or Eel stew.

Starting with meat, let us talk about pork, deliciously prepared in Alcanena and often grilled in Coruche and the surrounding areas of Salvaterra de Magos and Benavente. Try little bits with your drinks in the local bars ... Acom-fed pork is unforgettable!

The Ribatejo produces some of the finest kid and lamb meat in the country, try it grilled, fried, stewed or roast. There is something for everyone's taste.

The origins of sweets from the Ribatejo are buried in past history, particularly from the north of the province. Many recipies came from medieval rehigious orders such as the Templars, Christ and Avis and have delightful names such as " Little Cheeses from the Sky "...

The fields of Almeirim and Benavente, offer ideal conditions for the cultivation of early strawberries and melons, also other delicious produce arriving in quantity at your table, just in time for your visit...

Welcome to the Ribatejo!

