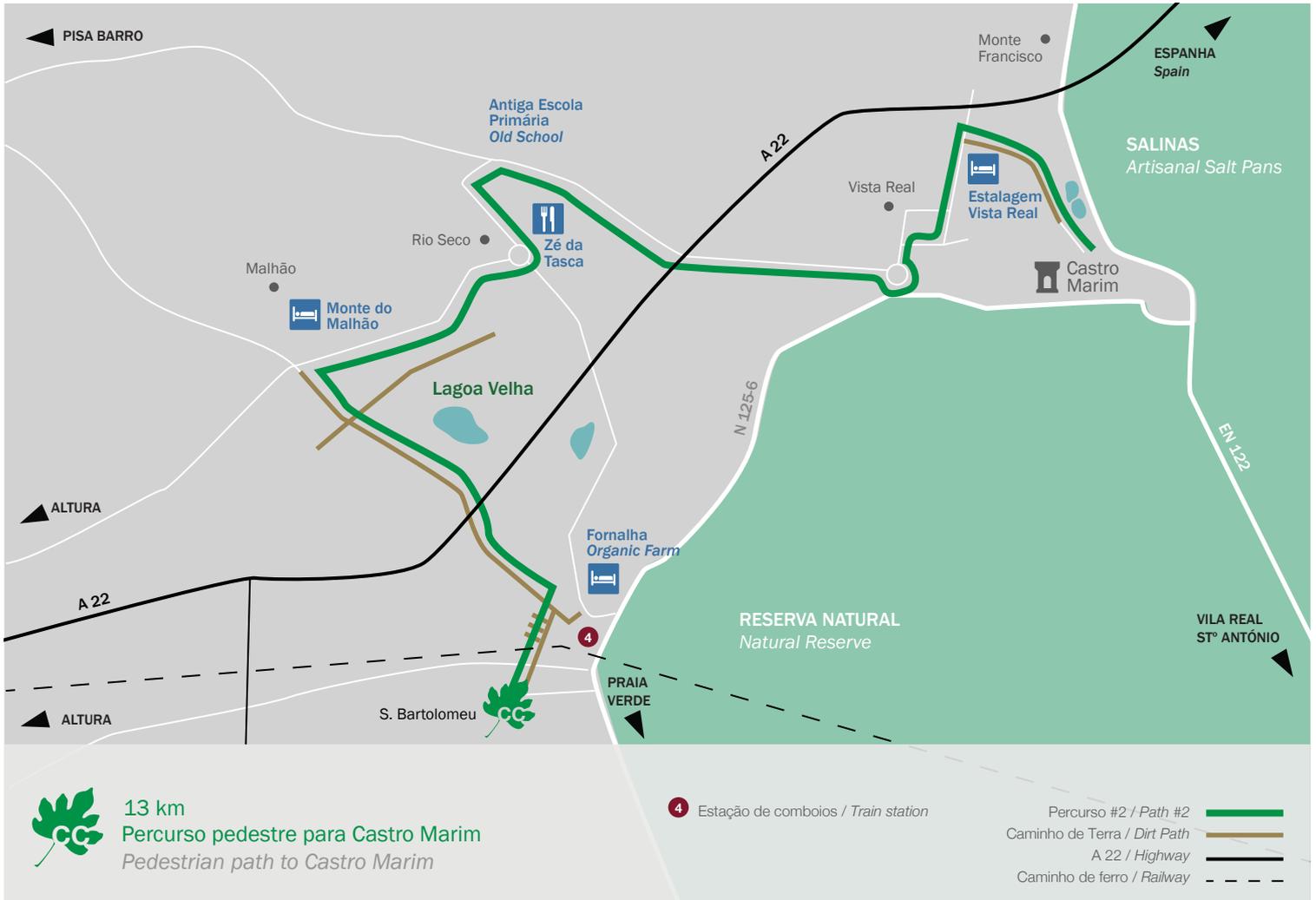




COMPANHIA DAS CULTURAS  
castro marim



**WALK:** Lagoa Velha / Castro Marim  
Distance: 4km / 9km  
Difficulty: easy  
Best time: all year

You exit Companhia das Culturas via its northern end, walking down a dirt track that runs through the property all the way to the wetlands. Here you can still find one of the most common plants of this ecosystem, salicornia, but also bittercress, thistle, chard or borage. On the right-hand side there's a reed bed and an orchard of quince trees; further ahead, but on the left-hand side, you'll find reed mace and rush. Crossing the road and the railway line, turn left and take the dirt track. On this section of the foothills the landscape is dominated by olive trees, carob trees, prickly pear and reed beds. Here and there you will also come across orange groves and small vegetable gardens near the streams.

The so-called "terras de talisca" – terrain of soft, reddish slate – begins once you've passed under the A22 motorway flyover, with stone pines, Mediterranean dwarf palms and cork oaks. Roughly around 1km away on the right-hand side you'll come across a wooden gate with the CC logo and a doorway. Here you can opt to enter the Lagoa Velha property.

The property comprises 80 hectares of stone pines, cork oaks, fig trees and carob trees. Throughout the year you can spot a huge variety of birdlife around the reservoir lined with rush and reed mace where the property's sheep drink from. This is the ideal setting for a picnic. From the highest point, near the century-old eucalyptus, you can enjoy immense views: the mouth of the Guadiana river to the east, the Monte Gordo Bay and the Ria Formosa to the south, and the vastness of hills and hillocks of the Serra do Caldeirão to the north.

If you choose to continue the walk until Castro Marim, then when the track ends and meets an asphalt road, turn right in the direction of Rio Seco. Once you reach Rio Seco, if you want a spot of lunch then restaurant Zé da Tasca is a good place to try out the local meats or fresh grilled fish from the coast.

Once back on the road, and making a turn at Vista Real, you'll already be able to see from the highest point the traditional salt pans and the mediaeval structure of Castro Marim. Once there, walk up to the castle, which has a small but very interesting museum focusing mainly on the Phoenician and Greek presence along the mouth of the Guadiana and which offers an excellent viewpoint over the river and the traditional salt pans that extend to the east. To the southwest stands the São Sebastião Fort, built in the mid 17th century, from where you can also enjoy the views over the industrial salt pans and the undulating Serra.