



COMPANHIA DAS CULTURAS

castro marim



WALK: Cacela Velha/Ria Formosa

Distance: 8km

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 and, further ahead but on the left-hand side, you'll find reed mace and rush lining an asphalt road that runs parallel to the railway line. Turn left. This road runs along the last manifestation of the barrocal (sub-region between the Serra and the coast) in this corner of the Algarve. Some 500 metres north begins the so-called "terras de talisca" – terrain of soft, reddish slate. Apart from some spontaneous vegetation like the thyme you can see on the right-hand side of the road, the area is dominated by orange groves and horticulture. Once the road crosses the small bridge over the railway it takes the direction of Vila Nova de Cacela. Old rain-fed orchards reappear here, with carob, fig, olive and almond trees. The Ribeiro do Álamo valley is dominated by almond trees which bloom in January. Once you're reached Vila Nova de Cacela, any of the three cafés on the left-hand side of the main

crossroads are a good place to try out some of the best regional sweets and pastries.

Walking on in the same direction you'll soon cross the EN125 main road. Some of the region's most fertile lands can be found around this area. The landscape was shaped during the Islamic period, mainly based on rain-fed orchards and also cereal crops. Upon reaching Cacela Velha you'll come across an urban settlement of Islamic matrix and a fine example of traditional southern architecture. The fort, rebuilt in the 18th century right after the earthquake, evokes the days of piracy. "There were defensive structures in the place at least since the 10th century. And surveillance of the coast became the fort's prime mission right after the Reconquest: the local inhabitants would take shelter there upon hearing the bells sounding the alarm when privateers approached in their constant raids." From the wall you can see the Ria Formosa, which from here extends 60km to the west all the way to the Ancão river in Loulé. It comprises some 18,400 hectares.