



The extent and intensity of the history lived by the towns of Bajo Guadiana, which has always been a **frontier** land between Muslims and Christians, and between the Spanish and the Portuguese, is made evident with the presence of a rich historic legacy of noteworthy cultural and touristic interest. Megalithic constructions, Roman cities and towns, medieval and renaissance castles, forts, bastions and defensive towers, traditional rural architecture, gastronomy, music and other examples of regional and recognised **art form** part of this cultural legacy.

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The sierras of Andévalo Occidental and Bajo Aleteño experienced their greatest period of mining splendour in the 19th century, thus causing the arrival of the industrial age to this corner of the Iberian Peninsula. Manganese, iron and other minerals were transported from the mines by narrow gauge railway to the river ports on the Guadiana, from where boats loaded with ore navigated the river towards the estuary. Today, these evocative **mining landscapes** can be visited and some of the sections of the railway lines have been reconditioned into natural or green routes.

Over a good part of the history of the human civilisation, whoever controlled the salt controlled the power of the world. In Bajo Guadiana, the Phoenicians found a Garden of Eden which also had very favourable conditions for obtaining sea salt: lowlands that would periodically flood, the **marshes** and many hours of sun. The activity still continues and **traditional salt mines** are being restored that offer guided tours amongst the live nature and the countryside where this tradition is still practiced accompanied by the silence and singing of birds.

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A detailed illustration of a Styrger Stork in flight, showing its long neck, large wings, and distinctive red beak and legs. The bird is depicted in a dynamic pose, with its wings spread wide and its head turned back. The illustration is set against a plain white background.

Nearly half of Bajo Guadiana is classified with some degree of environmental protection, both in Portugal and in Spain, which provides an idea of its recognised natural value. Coastal marshes, sea cliffs, dunes and beaches, semiarid steppes, extensive pastureslands, forested mountains, woods, river valleys, beautiful riverbank copes and landscapes all make up a mosaic of ecosystems of great scenic, ecological, botanical and faunistic value. A **biological and scenic diversity** that is difficult to find in other geographical areas of the same size.

The Guadalupe mountains landscape values especially biodiversity. The

The Guadiana valley, along with its coastline and its mountainous landscapes, has a mosaic of habitats and landscapes of great environmental and ecological value, something that is increasingly rare in Europe, especially for a group of illustrious inhabitants, birds. Guadiana means "the river of ducks". The diversity of **aquatic, steppe, woodland and river** **birdlife** concentrated in the Bajo Guadiana countryside, makes this territory an authentic paradise for lovers of ornithological tourism.

For those that prefer to live closer to nature and enjoy the rural world at a slower pace, Bajo Guadiana, on the Spanish side, offers three Non-Motorised Natural Routes, especially adapted and prepared for either cyclists or walkers. They are the **Guadiana Nature Route**, the **Guadiana Green Route** and the **Green Coastal Path Route**. Portugal has two important routes that connect with Bajo Guadiana, the **Coastal Ecopath** and the **Interior Ecopath** or the **Algarve Path**.

The important historical weight and heritage of Bajío Guadiana is due to the cultural influences that have arrived by boat over the millennia. The river and estuary towns have always communicated by boat between themselves and the outside. One of the best ways to take in the natural grandeur of the Guadiana estuary is to get to know it from the inside. And it is possible to do so. The quays of Ayamonte and Vila Real de Santo António offer evocative **boat trips** that travel the river Guadiana until arriving at the small ports of Alcoutim, Sanlúcar de Guadiana and Puerto de La Laja.

The coast of the Algarve and Huelva, even the Doñana National Park, **offer spectacular coastal landscapes**, characterised by the impressive cliffs, paradisiacal beaches, extensive marshes, and estuaries. There are also charming cities, full of history and cultural heritage, a unique golf offer, excellent tourist services, and renowned seafood gastronomy and beaches and sun in abundance.



The **interior mountains** of the Bajo Guadiana, its pig heritage and the appreciated Iberian cured ham are no less attractive than its coastline. Coming close to them from the world-famous Seville or the historic municipality of Mértola is an unforgettable experience. The town of Sierra de Huelva and those of Bajo Alentejo are full of history and heritage, culture and traditions, folklore and unique music. They also offer a beautifully prepared and ancestral mountain gastronomy using local and recognised products.

