



Tavira Portugal: Suberb Mix of Tradition & Nature

Description

“Any Portuguese town looks like bride’s finery – something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue.”
Mary Mccarthy



Bougainvillea in front of a traditional Algarve house, in Tavira, Portugal Adobe Photo Stock

What is Tavira, Portugal, known for, and is it worth a visit?



Tavira, Algarve is a seaside town that straddles the Gilão River via an old Roman bridge. From our first steps into the town, we were intrigued by the sense of community and authenticity. We were charmed by Tavira's winding cobblestone streets, hilltop castle, and many churches. So many of the town's residents were gathered in the main square chatting while children played. Oddly, we felt like we were intruding into their little perfect world, but at no time did we feel unwelcome. This town heavily relies on tourism in the summer, so our presence was normal for them even in the off-season.

Tavira is a great place to experience authentic Portuguese culture. It is one of the few cities in Europe that uniquely combines tradition and nature. In other words, it has everything you need for a fantastic vacation. This location is ideal for families and couples.



Tavira, Portugal, Park Adobe stock image

It has lovely streets, traditionally tiled houses, a variety of local restaurants, and beautiful sandy beaches. Tavira's surrounding towns are in themselves worth a visit. They are located in the countryside and provide a peaceful and beautiful setting.

You don't need a car to explore once you arrive in Tavira; it is a relatively tiny town full of charm. We arrived by car, parked on the outskirts, and explored the town on foot. Having a car provides convenience, but if you have a few days, we recommend exploring this place on foot. This is the best way to understand the town's heart and soul.

History of Tavira, Portugal



Tavira Castle

Tavira's origins date back to the late Bronze Age (1,000-800 BC). In the 8th century BC, it became one of the first Phoenician settlements in the Iberian West. Those Phoenicians were everywhere!

The Phoenicians created a provincial urban center with massive walls, urban structures, temples, and two harbors, which survived for about 200 years when it was destroyed by conflict.

The Moorish occupation of Tavira between the 8th and 13th centuries impacted the area's agriculture, architecture, and culture, which remain today. Tavira is known for its whitewashed buildings and Moorish-style doors, remnants of that time. The Moors built the Tavira Castle, palaces, and mosques.

During that time, Tavira was “put on the map” as it established itself as an important port for sailors and fishermen. Moorish Tavira blossomed rapidly, becoming one of the important towns of the west, which is today’s Algarve. In 1242, Dom Paio Peres Correia took Tavira back from the Moors in a bloody conflict of retaliation after seven of his Knights were killed during a period of truce.

1755 Earthquake

In the 18th century, the port was an important shipping location for exporting salt, dried fish, and wine. Sadly, the area was hit late in the century by a massive earthquake known as the Lisbon earthquake. In reality, the epicenter was in the Algarve region. The town buildings were destroyed for all practical purposes.



Tavira Algarve Portugal Adobe Stock Image

Tavira was rebuilt with many 18th-century buildings and its 37 churches. A bridge links the two parts of the town across the River Gilão. The lovely white church of Santa Maria do Castelo, built on the ruins of a mosque, holds the tombs of Dom Paio Peres Correia and his knights. The church dates back to the 13th century.

Fishing was the area’s primary industry, but it has declined due to the changing migration patterns of tuna and advancing silt in the river Gilão. Tourism has become a substantial part of their economy in the summer, as is the case for the region.

Where is Tavira, Portugal?



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Tavira is a Portuguese town and municipality situated east of the Algarve on the south coast of Portugal. It is 17 miles east of Faro and 47 miles west of Huelva across the river Guadiana into Spain. The slow-flowing Gilão River meets the Atlantic Ocean in Tavira. It is 104 miles from Seville, Spain.

Map of Tavira, Portugal

- [Tavira](#)

How to get to Tavira

The easiest way to get to Tavira is to fly into the Faro airport, which serves the Algarve region and is about a 30-minute drive by car. There are direct flights to Faro from Lisbon and many other European cities. From Faro, you can rent a car or take a taxi or public transportation to Tavira.

Most visitors, though, fly to the capital city of Lisbon and rent a car or take a bus to Tavira. Using toll roads, Tavira is about a 3-hour drive from Lisbon. From Seville, Spain, it's only two hours where we drove from that day. There are lots of sights along that route.

A car isn't necessary once you get to Tavira, but we would suggest it. If you want to explore the area, having a car gives you more flexibility. Driving in the Algarve and all of Portugal was easy, with excellent modern roads throughout the country.

Top 14 Things to Do in Tavira, Portugal

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Aerial cityscape of beautiful Tavira in the evening, Algarve, Portugal Adobe Stock Image

1. Tavira has a partially ruined castle with a Moorish influence. But inside the castle walls, there is a lovely garden. You can climb the ramparts and octagonal towers for fantastic coastal views.

2. Stroll Tavira's winding cobblestone streets. Near the Castle, you'll find several churches. The Gothic-design Igreja de Santa Maria do Castelo has a tall clock tower remodeled from a former minaret, while the Igreja de Santiago dates to the 13th century.

3. Archeological evidence has determined that the bridge with seven arches, the city's symbol, is from the Romans. Based on archaeological discoveries, it is believed that it likely replaced a bridge built during the Moorish occupation. It was rebuilt in 1667, then again after a 1989 flood. Today, it's accessible only to foot traffic.

4. Spend some time in Republic Square (*Praça da República*). This is the central town square of Tavira, also used as an outdoor amphitheater for events and concerts. It is a good spot for a meal or a drink at one of the many cafes. The tourist office is there as well.

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5. The museum (Nucleo Museologico Islamico) showcases the town's incredible historic culture. It contains 11th-century artifacts such as oil lamps, tiles, pots, etc.

6. Do you want to listen to some Portuguese music? Check out Fado com Historia. It's a place where you can enjoy fantastic Fado performances, a complimentary glass of wine, and traditional Portuguese snacks. This location introduces you to Tavira's rich history.



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7. One of those places where you can spy on the entire town is the Camera Obscura. An ancient optical device uses a convex lens to project an image. Tavira's camera obscura projects 360-degree images of the town inside the converted water tower. Its location is on the roof of the water tower. It features a dark room where a live image is projected onto a rotating table. This highly entertaining

location costs nearly \$6 to visit.

8. Without a doubt, the riverfront is one of the best tourist attractions. Thousands of tourists visit this area yearly, especially the Roman low-arched pedestrian bridge.

9. Tavira has a small tourist “train” (on wheels rather than a track) that runs between the Roman Bridge, Quatro Águas (Tavira Island), the Castle, and a few other stops. The entire loop takes 45 minutes, and it’s a fun way to see the sights if walking is a challenge. You can buy a single trip or an all-day pass from the driver. Departure times are the stops.

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10. Ria Formosa Nature Park is close to Tavira. It is primarily a natural wetland area with water channels, small islands, and beaches. It is a coastal lagoon protected from the sea by barrier islands. It is a paradise for birdwatchers, kayakers, and nature lovers; it is also home to salt pans and shellfish farming. To see its beauty, you need to ride a boat. During the migration season, it attracts nearly 200 bird species.

11. The local beach lies past the salt pans and can be reached via the nearby Santa Luzia footbridge or by ferry, taking visitors to the sand bar of Tavira Island (Ilha de Tavira.) It is part of the Ria Formosa and is known for being one of the most beautiful stretches of beach in the Algarve. The waters here are calm, so it’s a great family destination.



12. This town is ideal for foodies. So, treat yourself to a delicious meal. You can have a fine dining experience by booking a table at one of the most beautiful restaurants (such as Cercle.)

13. The Algarve has four wine-producing regions: Lagos, Portimao, Lagoa, and Tavira. Portugal's southern coast is protected by mountains that temper the weather. Ask for some of the local wine when enjoying a meal in town.

Cabanas de Tavira is a must!

14. Cabanas de Tavira is a small town near Tavira that dates to the 18th century when fishermen began building temporary cabanas (fishing huts) that eventually became permanent residences. Known locally just as Cabanas, today it's a growing tourist destination in its own right. Cabanas has a small downtown area of restaurants, shops, and cafes. The Cabanas beach is one of the least busy in the region, as it is only accessible by water taxi or walking at low tide.

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Cabanas de Tavira en Portugal Adobe Stock Image

Our first stop when arriving in Portugal was Obidos, north of Lisbon. Learn more about this charming town: [Obidos: Portugal Perfection](#).

Interesting Facts About Tavira



- The area has a military base, which contributes to the local economy.
- This region's economy is heavily reliant on tourism. Every year, thousands of tourists visit, particularly between June and August.
- Tavira is the Portuguese representative community for the inscription of the Mediterranean Diet as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity UNESCO.
- This town is also known for its fishing industry, but most people are unaware that fish migration has significantly impacted fishing. Many local fishermen have left the fishing industry to work in other small businesses. The decline in the fishing industry is primarily due to fish migration patterns.
- Tavira has a population of around 28,000, with 48 percent males and 52 percent females. It also has a sizable expat community. If you are not from Portugal, you will find it relatively easy to adjust to life here. Due to the influence of British expats, English is treated as a second language here.

- It's a small town, but its infrastructure rivals any major city. It has an excellent transportation system, government buildings, highways, railroads, etc. The entire local infrastructure connects residents to the rest of the continent.
- In the eighth century BC, this town was the first Phoenician settlement. However, it was abandoned around 300 BC. It has witnessed some of history's most significant eras. There are some interesting monuments from various periods here. Its original name was Balsa (Baal Saphon), which was later changed to Tavira. This is the place to go if you want to immerse yourself in Europe's rich history.
- This location also provides farm-oriented vacations to tourists and social support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Agritourism enthusiasts will undoubtedly enjoy the farm stays. Farm-based vacations can be especially beneficial for children.

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The Most Attractive Feature

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Tavira's most appealing feature is the Gilao River. It is also known as Rio Sequa, especially in the town center. It runs through the town, so you don't need to go anywhere special to see it. You can enjoy its views while sipping coffee in one of the many cafés or taking a boat ride to see the stunning sunset.

The Gilao River isn't just for scenery... Many small businesses rely on it.

Fishermen and traders, for example, use it all day, every day. This is primarily because this river flows into the nearby Atlantic Ocean. That's why it is also strategically important for Portugal. Along its banks, many watermills are in use for agricultural produce.

When to Visit Tavira



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Before planning a trip to this town, remember that it has a Mediterranean climate; you may want to avoid the scorching sun and avoid visiting during the hot, dry summers. Tavira has a hot-summer

Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Together with Faro, it is among the sunniest cities in Portugal and in Europe, typically averaging around 3,150 hours of sunshine annually.

Spring or mild winter seasons may be ideal for visiting, which is when we visited. It was perfect with gorgeous sunsets!

However, if you enjoy sunny days and relaxing on the beach, June and August are calling out to you. It is also when you will see large crowds in Tavira, as the mid 80s are not too hot for many tourists. They spend much time near the river or on the beaches, admiring the sunsets and the beauty of the water.

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Where to Stay In Tavira



Our visit to Tavira was on our way to our hotel, a bit farther down the Algarve Coast in Almancil. It was just 35 minutes farther into Portugal. Our stay at the Conrad Hilton was the first in the Hilton Conrad collection of hotels. It was a spectacular and great place to launch from to explore the Algarve coast. We used our Hilton points, and our stay was free in one of the most elegant hotels we have ever stayed in.

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There are many hotels or rental options to choose from in the area. The two links below will help you find the right place for you. They offer hotels and vacation homes.

We believe it is important to price out properties on various sites. [Expedia](#) is a US-based company, whereas [Booking.com](#) is Europe-based. Not all properties appear on both. If the establishment has a website, check the price there as well.

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Final Thoughts



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Tavira has many things that captivate and make you feel like you're in another world. What we like best about Tavira is that it adheres to its traditions. Even in the twenty-first century, you can sense its values everywhere. Everything reflects Portugal's history and traditions, from enchanting towns to fisherman villages.

So go check it out... It's a delightful place to explore and has a beautiful blend of nature and life to make you fall in love with it.

Check out the [official tourism website for Tavira, Portugal](#), for more information.



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MORADORES DE TAVIRA E DE FARO QUE
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DEFENDERAM NESTA PONTE A CAUSA DE
D.JOÃO I, MESTRE DE AVIS E NELA PROCLA-
MARAM A VITÓRIA DECISIVA DO ALCARVE
NA LUTA PELA INDEPENDENCIA DE
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We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

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[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

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