

Explore hidden charms

Venture beyond the Algarve to explore the Atlantic's hidden charm, says **ED COLMAN**

Portugal's south coast has always been one of the most popular holiday destinations on the planet among sun-seekers and golfers but there is a new kid on the block which is challenging the Algarve for its crown.

Cascais is located on the west coast of Portugal, right on the edge of mainland Europe but still just 20 kilometres from Lisbon making it a truly exceptional destination with something for everyone.

While it is becoming increasingly popular it retains its authentic Portuguese character, often under a cloudless blue sky, with none of the hustle and bustle you get in the Algarve.

You can still relax on miles of idyllic beaches - and don't miss Guincho Beach which is overlooked by towering dunes; just a short walk from Cabo de Roca, the most westerly point in Europe.

The emphasis is firmly on Portuguese produce in Cascais and you are spoiled for choice with a fine selection of characterful food shops and wonderful restaurants that are certain to tickle your taste buds.

If you love seafood you are in for an extra treat, because the region's climate and close proximity to the ocean allows it to boast a wide variety of delicious and reasonably priced fresh fish and seafood.

Cascais has so much to offer, the bright sunny days allow you to admire the unmatched coastline and appreciate the beauty of the distant horizon.

Like every great destination Cascais has a story to tell and listening to the



locals' tales of kings and spies is an experience like no other and one that will stay with you long after the flight home.

Glamour, culture and entertainment can all be found in abundance and if the great outdoors is your thing then be sure to book up a 4x4 jeep safari or try your hand at surfing and sailing to experience the thrill of the wind and the waves.

Cascais' golf courses stay with you long after your visit. Why is it everyone with a soul prefers golf in Cascais to the very good courses on offer in the Algarve? One word: atmosphere.

The advantage to the region being a lesser-known holiday hotspot is that the calm pace of life and lack of crowds creates a unique feeling of comfort and

■ **Baia de Cascais: An alternative to the Algarve, with some fine golf courses.** Pictures: **AZALEA GROUP**

well-being, so you are certain to return touched by this unforgettable hidden gem. Visiting Portugal and knowing Portugal are two very different scenarios and if you really want to get to know this magnificent country you need to dive into its under-explored delights and Cascais is the perfect place to do so.

Getting there is easy with to Lisbon, just a short drive away, from all over the UK with national airlines TAP Portugal and British Airways plus scheduled airline Monarch and budget pair easyJet and Ryanair. The flight time is around 2.5 hours and tickets costs from £30 (one way).

You're spoiled for choice when it comes to where to stay in the area and the luxurious Palacio and InterContinental hotels in Estoril are a good place to start. Both offer first class contemporary rooms and a fantastic range of activities, including world-class spas and elegant restaurants.

Factfile

■ We travelled with TAP Portugal from London Heathrow, who also fly from Gatwick and Manchester to Lisbon up to nine times a day, with prices from £125 return including all taxes and surcharges. For further information, visit www.flytap.com or call 0345 601 0932.

■ Staying at the Palacio Estoril hotel which recently opened a Banyan Tree Spa with 14 massage treatment rooms, indoor swimming-pool, sauna, Jacuzzi, Turkish bath and gym. Rooms are from £124 per night but be sure to visit the hotels website (palacioestorilhotel.com) for their regular offers and stay and play deals before booking.

■ It is worth knowing about the golf passport, that offers a choice of three or five rounds at the seven courses along Estoril's Golf Coast for €196 and €307 respectively. See www.estorilgolfcoast.com.

Travel news

■ **Venice** - You must book by today for a British Airways Holidays (ba.com/Venice; 0344 493 0125) offer of two nights at the three-star Centrale Hotel (B&B) in Mestre, from £99pp (two sharing). Includes flights from Gatwick. Valid for travel November 1 to December 15.

■ **Prague** - Blue Sea Holidays (blueseaholidays.co.uk; 020 3474 0453) offers two nights at the four-star Galileo Hotel (B&B) from £95pp (two sharing) or three nights from £109pp - saving up to £100pp (51pc). Includes flights from London airports. Valid for travel on select dates in November 2016 and January 2017. Book by this Monday.

■ **Dubai** - Tropical Sky (01342 886941; www.tropicalsky.co.uk) offers four nights stays at the five-star Atlantis The Palm (half-board) from £1,119pp (two sharing) - saving £840pp (43pc). Includes transfers and flights from London. Valid for travel January 8-February 9. Book by November 7.

■ **Sri Lanka** - Southall Travel (www.southalltravel.co.uk; 020 8705 0086) offers 10 nights at four-star Royal Palms Beach Hotel (B&B) from £881pp (two sharing). Flights from Birmingham on November 8.

■ **Canada** - Round the World Experts (www.roundtheworldexperts.co.uk; 0800 188 4503) offers an 11-day Forest & Lakes of Ontario Journey from £2,299pp (two sharing). Includes nine nights in a collection of four-star and five-star hotels, nine days car hire, a Toronto city pass, Niagara Falls day tour from Toronto, canoeing in Algonquin Provincial Park and a lunch cruise around the 1,000 islands and flights from Heathrow. Valid for travel from May 1-June 21. Book by November 30 and quote reference: 4316734.

■ **Mexico** - Virgin Holidays (www.virginholidays.co.uk; 0344 557 3870) offers seven nights at the Hard Rock Hotel Riviera Maya - Heaven (all-inclusive) in Cancun from £1,225pp - saving up to £1,204pp (50pc). Includes flights from Gatwick on December 6.

Local offers

■ Latest holiday offers from Norwich. Telephone Travel Norwich Airport on 01603 428700, email enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk or visit www.travelnorwich.com to check availability.

■ **Tenerife** - December 1, 4, 8, and 11, seven nights, 3* Named Hotel in Las Caletillas, All Inclusive from £325pp

■ **Costa Del Sol** - December 22, seven nights, 4* Named Hotel in Fuengirola, Half Board from £639pp - Includes Christmas Gala Meal

■ **Costa Blanca** - December 23, seven nights, 4* Named Hotel in Benidorm, Half Board from £699pp - Includes Christmas Gala Meal

■ **Gran Canaria** - May 1 and 8, seven nights, 5* Platinum Hotel in Maspalomas, Half Board from £579pp - Saving £122 per couple

■ **Majorca** - May 2, seven nights, 5* Platinum Hotel in Cala D'or, Half Board from £489pp

■ **Cyprus** - May 4, seven nights, 5* Platinum Hotel in Limassol, Half Board from £549pp - Saving £274 per couple

■ **Rhodes** - May 17 and June 28, 7 Nights, 3* Named Hotel in Afandou, All Inclusive from £465pp - New for 2017

■ Prices are correct at time of going to print, all subject to availability and based on maximum occupancy.

■ Prices excludes £10/adult Norwich Airport Development Fee payable at the Airport.

