



**Our
(Soul &) Surf Guide
to the
Surf Spots
of The
Algarve**



The Algarve.

Not always the first place you think of as being littered with surf spots, right? It's an easy assumption that all the good spots are in the north – near to the famous waves in Peniche, Ereceira and Nazare. But down here we have a selection of some of the most consistent waves in Europe – plus we are smug about the sunny sunshine when everyone up north is shivering in their beanie hats and 5mm wetsuits.

If you're lucky, a 'Levant' swell (which comes from the east, and is generated by Mediterranean storms) will wang its merry way over here – and this is when the south coast really lights up. The Levant is everyone's favourite thing, especially in the summertime when it is a very rare beast.

So how did Soul & Surf end up here?

Ed & Sof first travelled Europe in their camper van Neil in 2009, chasing the sun down south for the winter (as many do) and fell in love with the wild, rugged, yet easygoing Algarve and its endless beaches, before heading off to India. Between south Asian seasons they kept on coming back to visit friends who'd moved here, dreaming of having something a little more permanent.

Scroll forward a few years, two hotels in India and Sri Lanka, pop-ups around the world - and we all started thinking about a European home.

Experimenting with three years of *pop-ups in the Algarve* run by the magnificent duo of Adam & Rach, we opened full-time here in 2019 and haven't looked back since. Portugal reveals a little more of itself to us every day, and now is as much home as Kerala and Lanka. Yes, it gets a bit busy in the summer (where doesn't?) but you can still find peace in the surf, especially if you are prepared to get up early and beat the surf schools.

Why here?

The south and west coastlines of Portugal are sprinkled with point breaks, reef breaks and some of the best beachies we've surfed.

The wild, rugged west coast of the Algarve takes the full brunt of the Atlantic Ocean's power, so if you are looking for heavier, more consistent swells & punchy waves head thataway. The summer swells here, like everywhere else, are smaller - with the predominant northerly winds kicking in from June-ish onwards.

The south coast faces Africa, and doesn't pick up as much swell as the west - so is a great option if you are into something a little more chilled.

An aerial photograph of a beach with waves crashing onto the shore. The water is a mix of deep blue and white foam. The sand is a warm, golden-brown color. Several people are visible on the beach and in the water, some with surfboards. The text "South Coast" is overlaid in the center of the image.

South Coast

Meia Praia

Fun, fast beach break, with peaky waves all the way up the beach – needs the lesser-spotted Levant (easterly) swell to work properly. Translates literally from Portuguese as ‘half beach’ – because of the separation of the beach by the river estuary between Alvor & Lagos.

With enough swell you can sometimes surf the Alvor side, but we are lazy and Lagos is our home, so when it is working here we make the most of it *doffs cap to the Levant*. There is a lovely right-hander that breaks off the wall which only works low-mid tide – the rest of the beach is also only surfable at low tide unless it's hoofing. Watch out for sunbathers and people helpfully swimming right in front of the surf.



Porto de Mos

Another Lagos beach, a bit further out of town, with rock reef breaks at both ends of the beach. On big westerly swells the right reef works, east swells - left reef; with a decent, but shallow beach break in the middle. Can be epic on a decent westerly, and the reefs can work like a dream - but does get very busy when this happens. Two very good seafood cafes on the beach.

Rach's Note: If you surf too far over to the left, you might see some naked men doing lunges.



Praia da Luz

The 'Beach of Light' has a very good reef to the left of the beach, a beachie in the middle and the rarely-spotted right hander - which can be an incredible, barrelling point break but VERY inconsistent. In two years we've seen it work properly once. Picks up both west and east swells, and not great at high tide.



Cabanas

Only works on a big westerly because of a big headland that blocks the Levant. Reef on left & right sides, with a bit of shallow, shoredumpy beach break action in the middle. REALLY fun for bodysurfing.

There is a rumoured point break - never seen it work. Cabanas can be a really good shout if it's low tide and massive everywhere else, and is usually pretty quiet. Gorgeous too.



Burgau

Beautiful fishing village, with two point breaks (left & right) and a beach break in the middle. Often very busy if there are waves - Levant for the left to work, westerly for the right. Burgau is fantastic for longboards, but be prepared for Brits abroad on shortboards, often paddling with both arms at the same time. Good shout for the winter if you are here in the wave season.



Salema

Huge beach with peaks all the way down. Again, only really works at low tide – this is the case for most of the south coast – and needs a lotta swell to work. So dreamy when it does though. Many cats. Many fish. What came first, we often wonder?



Ingrina

Here lies another phantom point break (right hand side) that needs a huge swell in order to switch on. Rach and Adam surfed it once but it was a bit shit and everyone on the other wave was watching, so they gave up after a while and sloped back to the good left hander that breaks off a rock into a sand bank.

Ingrina needs big swells, but then it can be tricky with strong currents pulling you towards the rocks. Not for beginners and if there are more than 5 surfers on this wave, it feels very busy. You can always surf the beach break in the middle, but it's pretty average. Very good seafood restaurant, right on the beach.



Zavial

Our go-to when the west coast is far too large and there are hellish northerly winds (hello July & August). Can often be a huge closeout, although if the sandbanks are good you get French-esque peaky, fast waves. Also has a point break that looks dangerous as it breaks off a cliff, but actually is pretty forgiving unless it's sizey – and you will have to fight the locals for this one. Zavial gets VERY busy, as some days it is only the option for an offshore wave.



Barranco

Bumpy lumpy road all the way down. Watch out for potholes and toilet paper on the beach. Full of van-lifers (hence the toilet paper), some friendly, some too friendly. There is a left & right hander, and only works well on a big westerly swell.





Mid-Coast

(Sagres beaches)

Mareta

Sargres' most sheltered spot, only works when it is hoofing on a big westerly, as the swell has to wrap around a couple of headlands. It can be quite fast and shallow here - low tide spot only.



Tonel

Sargres' most popular, consistent and busiest wave. There are two different sections to the beach, right hander on the right and another right hander that breaks from the rock in the middle. Can be a really impressive spot if there are big swells, and gets pretty wedge-y and heavy with some size. It gets crowded in the summer with surf schools and surfers, and at that time of year the car park is a horror show. Take deep breaths. We call it Toenail, make of that what you will.



Beliche

Algarve's premium bodyboard wave™, which doesn't work as often as Tonel in the summer. Sheltered by huge cliffs, so you get decent protection from the wind. Beliche is beautiful, but walking up and down the steps to the beach is fairly arduous with anything much bigger than a bodyboard. Lots of barrels, body surfers, bodyboarders and sunbathers.



An aerial photograph of a beach scene. The top of the image shows white, foamy waves crashing onto a sandy shore. The water transitions from a light tan near the beach to a deep, vibrant green further out. Several surfers are visible in the water, each with a bright blue surfboard. The text "West is Best" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, serif font.

West is Best

Castelejo

A west coast favourite, that works on all tides. Ideal size for it is anything below 5ft - much bigger than that and it gets a bit hectic. Better on an easterly wind, although the cliffs can offer a bit of shelter as the tide pushes up. The beach is a right stunner, and it's rare not to find a wave here - not as crowded as some of the other spots in the summer (especially if you get there early).

In between Castelejo and Cordoama there is a gorgeous look-out point (miradouro) that you can drive up to and check both spots from above. Also a great spot to watch the sun set into the ocean.



Cordoama

Long ol' beach. Cordoama is peaky, same as Castelejo and also works on all tides, but can be a heavy closeout at low. Not for the faint-hearted when there is size, and not longboard-friendly (unless it's tiny). Can be fast – and gets very busy. Don't crash into the shark-fin rock. Don't say we didn't warn you.



Bordeira

Probably the most exposed spot in our list - it picks up everything that the Atlantic can throw at us. Very exposed to wind. It is peaky, with a lush A-frame at the left side of the beach. If you can bear it, it is often worth the trek to the north end of the beach to get a peak to yourself - don't try to take your car like Joel, and spend longer digging it out of the sand than you do in the water.

When it gets really big and is at high tide you can sometimes surf a little reformer wave in a baby pool that forms in front of the A-frame, if you don't want to compete with everyone else. One of the heavier waves around, can be tricky with anything above 4ft swell. Not the best for longboarding unless it is tiny and no wind. One of the most beautiful beaches in the Algarve, IOHO, and that is saying a lot.



Amado

Slightly more south-west facing than Bordeira - so if the wind is too northerly at Bordeira, try here for a bit more shelter. Summertime - surf school bonanza, and very popular with learners, so expect it to be busy. On it's day Amado can be fantastic - peaky, consistent and fast, but watch out for the rip in the middle. Another unicorn point break on the right hand side - not seen this one work yet. Good beach bar for beers, but don't eat the hamburgers.



Arrifana

Very popular spot on the west coast - because it faces slightly towards the south, Arrifana has protection from big swells and winds, and can be the only clean, mellow wave working. Good for longboarding, and shortboards (more likely in the winter). However, the crowds here arguably compare to those at Malibu and it can get a bit aggro in the water. Don't be tempted to drive all the way to the bottom of the hill - you're likely to either get told off or get stuck. Godspeed.



Ponta Ruiva

A renowned point break on the west coast. DO NOT go there with a hire car unless you have fully comp insurance - the road down is basically a dirt track. Left-hand point, which is usually pretty fat, that can go for ages. Perfect for a bigger board on most days, although can be challenging with size, with a lot of water movement. Low tide gets a bit rocky - mid-high tide works best for the point.

There is a decent right-hander out of the summer months which is fast and heavy - shortboards only. With the volume of water moving around the point, there can be very strong currents and rips - don't paddle out alone unless you are a shredder.

