



(1) Natural Park of Serras de Aire e Candeeiros > (2) Serra da Estrela > (3) Natural Reserve of Serra da Malcata > (4) Naturtejo Geopark > (5) International Tagus Natural Park > (6) National Park of Monfragüe > (7) Los Barruecos Natural Monument > (8) Natural Park of Cornalvo > (9) Natural Park of Serra de São Mamede > (10) Alqueva > (11) Natural Park of Vale do Guadiana > (12) Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina > (13) Natural Reserve of the Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha > (14) Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado

## THE GREEN ROUTE

The territories that comprise the EUROACE Euroregion are blessed with natural spaces of grand ecological value. The incomparable landscapes that can be found here are in some cases singularly unique to all of Europe.

We suggest starting the EUROACE Green Route in Portugal's Centro Region at the **(1) Natural Park of Serras de Aire e Candeeiros**, just south of Porto de Mós. The park is of great interest from both geological and biodiversity standpoints.

Heading northeast, you'll climb the highest mountainous region in mainland Portugal, the **(2) Serra da Estrela**. These mountains are stunningly beautiful in every season and the area has a wide range of tourist and gastronomic offerings. In addition to cities like Guarda and Covilhã, villages and settlements of special interest include Manteigas, Gouveia, Seia and Celorico da Beira.

Southeast of the Serra da Estrela is the **(3) Natural Reserve of Serra da Malcata**, south of the Côa River, within the municipal limits of Sabugal and Penamacor. A green belt that runs from chestnut groves to prairie to Mediterranean shrublands. The **(4) Naturtejo Geopark** is located halfway between the district of Castelo Branco and the Alentejo town of Nisa. A region of immense geological wealth where the landscape of Monsanto, the fossils in Penha Garcia, the mines in Segura and the spectacular Portas de Ródão all merit special mention.

The **Tagus River** forms a natural border between Spain and Portugal for over 50 kilometres, shaping the first **(5) International Park** in Europe. The park covers some 50,000 hectares of land around the vertex where all three EUROACE regions meet. The richness of the landscape and the flora and fauna are particularly stunning when seen from aboard the Balcón del Tajo, which covers the entire territory between Herrera de Alcántara, Santiago de Alcántara and Cedillo, making its last stop in the Portuguese town of Lentiscals.

South of Plasencia lies the **(6) National Park of Monfragüe**, a bird sanctuary for species such as the cinereous vulture, the Iberian imperial eagle and the black stork. The park has been a Biosphere Reserve since 2003. Considered one of the least altered existing European ecosystems, it represents one of the most extensive remaining specimens of Mediterranean forest and scrubland.

Continuing south, head toward Malpartida de Cáceres to visit the **(7) Los Barruecos Natural Monument**. A singular landscape dominated by large granite stones and ponds where you'll find the former Lavadero de Lanãs (wool laundry building), which today houses the Vostell-Malpartida Museum.

Picking up the A-66, drive south and in the area surrounding Mérida you'll find the **(8) Natural Park of Cornalvo**, next to a Roman-era reservoir surrounded by holm



São Mamede Mountains

oaks, apricot trees, rockroses, heathers and diverse wildlife, ranging from otters and mountain cats to black storks and the Eurasian eagle-owl.

Heading towards the upper Alentejo, in the area surrounding Portalegre, you'll encounter the **(9) Natural Park of Serra de São Mamede**. 55,000 hectares of oak and apricot trees, which are home to 150 different bird species.

Travel further south towards the Guadiana River that delineates the first few kilometres of frontier, just until you reach the largest artificial lake in Europe: **(10) Alqueva**, 252 km<sup>2</sup> of water surrounded by Mediterranean pasturelands and forests. This forms a unique place for those who wish to sail across its waters, do outside sport or simply gaze upon the stars in the UNESCO certified, Dark Sky Reserve.

Trace the course of the Guadiana River south until you come across the **(11) Natural Park of Vale do Guadiana**, 70,000 hectares around the town of Mértola, in which holm oak, rockrose and Mediterranean scrubland grow. It is also home to the Pulo do Lobo, the most fantastic geomorphological accident in the Alentejo.

Now, heed the ocean's call and go west to Europe's best conserved coastline and the **(12) Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina**. Join zoologists and botanists from around the world who come to visit its unique species of fauna and flora.

Driving north up the Atlantic coast, the next stop is the **(13) Natural Reserve of the Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha**, two wetlands of great ecological value that also include some spectacular dunes that separate them from the ocean.

The EUROACE Green Route finishes a bit further north, at the **(14) Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado**, a very fertile wetland near Alcácer do Sal, filled with rice paddies and over 200 species of birds that converge on this region that enjoys special protection.



Villanueva del Fresno