



(1) Figueira da Foz > (2) Aveiro > (3) Luso > (4) Curia > (5) Covilhã > (6) Manteigas > (7) Monfortinho Thermal Baths > (8) Tagus International Natural Park > (9) Melero Meander > (10) Ambroz Valley > (11) Jerte Valley > (12) La Vera Valley > (13) Las Villuercas > (14) Cijara Reservoir > (15) La Serena Reservoir > (16) Orellana Reservoir > (17) Roman thermal baths at Alange > (18) Alqueva Lake > (19) Natural Park of Vale do Guadiana > (20) Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina > (21) Natural Reserve of Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha > (22) Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado

THE WATER ROUTE

Start the Water Route in **(1) Figueira da Foz**, next to the spectacular mouth of the Mondego River. Drive north along the coast until you reach **(2) Aveiro**, the Venice of Portugal, constructed over a network of canals. The nearby beaches of Costa Nova and Barra are also definite musts.

The Centro Region hides a secret paradise of inland bodies of water: Thermal sites such as **(3) Luso** and **(4) Curia** lead toward the Serra da Estrela, the most popular mountainous area on mainland Portugal, with an additional wide selection of tourist thermal facilities in **(5) Covilhã** and **(6) Manteigas**. In the Serra da Malcata, near towns like Penamacor and the singular little settlement of Monsanto, you will find the **(7) Monfortinho Thermal Baths** next to the Spanish border.

The waters that feed into the **(8) Tagus International Natural Park** provide a meeting point for Extremadura, Alentejo and the Centro Region. The river forms a natural boundary between the two countries and is a space of great natural value. The landscape can also be enjoyed from aboard the Balcón del Tajo, whose itineraries include stops in Lenticais, Cedillo, Herrera de Alcántara and Santiago de Alcántara.

The route then moves into Extremadura and heads north, where the district of Las Hurdes welcomes you with its lush riverbanks, waterfalls and caves with petroglyphs and cave paintings. You cannot miss a visit to the beautiful **(9) Melero Meander**.

River Ambroz. Hervás



Comporta Beach

Now driving east, you'll find yourself in the **(10) Ambroz Valley**, with its well-known spa town Baños de Montemayor, Hervás and its Jewish Quarter and the Roman ruins of Cáparra and Guijo de Granadilla.

Two of the most well-known valleys in Extremadura can be found in the foothills of the Sierra de Gredos. To the north, the **(11) Jerte Valley**, with its Garganta de los Infernos (literally Throats of Hell) natural pools and the spectacular Los Pilones and to the south, **(12) La Vera Valley**, a district overflowing with natural pools, gorges and waterfalls.

The Water Route continues, flowing into **(13) Las Villuercas** and Guadalupe, until you reach the headwaters of the Guadiana River and the three reservoirs in the area: **(14) Cijara**, **(15) La Serena** (the largest in Spain) and **(16) Orellana**. The latter of which holds the claim of being the only Spanish freshwater beach to have been honoured with a Blue Flag. Downriver and close to Mérida is the Roman reservoir of Proserpina, the Natural Park of Cornalvo and the **(17) Roman thermal baths at Alange**.

As you drive toward the Alentejo, you'll come to the **(18) Alqueva Lake**, the largest in Europe. This enormous expanse of water offers a multitude of possibilities for water tourism. 'Floating' houses, rowboats or sailing boats can be hired to explore this sea surrounded by holm oaks. You can explore this inland sea from different piers on the Spanish side (Villareal y Cheles) and on the Portuguese side (Monsaraz, Amieira and the Moura wharf). These 1160 kilometres of inland coastline constitute a truly unique space in Europe.

The river runs south to the **(19) Natural Park of Vale do Guadiana**, next to the town of Mértola, where you can appreciate one of the most spectacular geological accidents on this unique river, the Pulo do Lobo. Leaving Ourique behind and passing by the Gorge of Santa Clara-a-Velha, next to the Castro da Cola, you'll encounter the **(20) Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina**, an area sprinkled with virgin beaches near Zambujeira do Mar and Vila Nova de Milfontes, which also includes the final stretch of the Mira River.

Tracing the Atlantic coast north you'll finally come to the **(21) Natural Reserve of Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha**, where freshwater and saltwater meet, creating a diversified group of aquatic and riverbank ecosystems.

Further north up the coast, you'll reach the **(22) Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado**. The sublime beaches of the surrounding area like Pego, Carvalhal, Comporta and Tróia, just under the Serra da Arrábida make for the perfect finish.