

FÓIA 3

Fóia is the highest point in the Algarve, at an altitude of 902 metres. The viewpoint provides a privileged view to the south, across land stretching all the way to the coastline. Piles of rock known as outcrops stick out of the landscape, structures often found in areas predominantly made up of solid rocks such as syenite, granite and the like.

Though snowfall is very rare in the Algarve, it is most likely to occur in Fóia, and it is said that it can be expected every seven years. Frost is a more frequent occurrence on the north side of Fóia, and every year sees the low temperatures necessary to allow for a good crop of apples.

TERRACES

Orange, cherry, peach and chestnut trees are grown on the terraces built into the slopes, each one slightly slanted to avoid land erosion from rainwater. These agricultural terraces also serve as pastures for goats and cows.

PONTIC RHODODENDRON (*Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *baeticum*) 4

This plant, which is endemic to the Iberian Peninsula, may be the most notable surviving element of the laurel forests that once covered this landmass. Though these forests were practically destroyed by the glaciations brought by the Pleistocene period (which started approximately 2 million years ago and ended about 10,000 years ago) nowadays, this plant grows in the wild in the Monchique and Serra do Caramulo mountains in Portugal, and in the Aljibe Massif in Andalusia, Spain. This plant is threatened due to its limited geographical distribution and the isolated nature of these populations.

In Monchique, the species is found in soils with a high moisture content, in a Sub-Atlantic environment. However, Mediterranean elements can also be detected in the southernmost areas where it is found, which sometimes occur as a result of the degradation of these habitats.

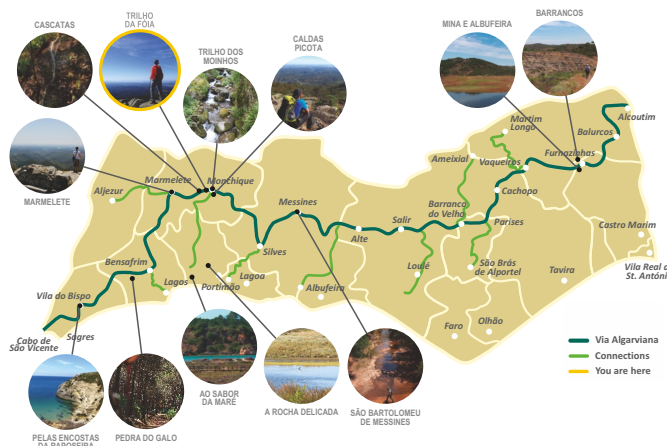
The Pontic Rhododendron contains alkaloids that are poisonous to cattle. In Monchique, however, it is said to be recommended as the main ingredient in "mother-in-law tea". It is so notable, in fact, that it is the subject of a popular local song in Monchique.



USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

- Monchique Town Hall: +351 282 910 200
- Monchique Civil Parish Council: +351 282 912 871
- Almargem Association: +351 289 412 959
- Monchique Health Centre: +351 282 910 100
- Monchique Volunteer Firefighters: +351 282 910 000
- National Republican Guard - Monchique: +351 282 912 629
- Monchique Tourist Information Centre: +351 282 911 189
- If you see a fire, call: 117
- In the event of an emergency, call: 112

For more information visit: www.vialgarviana.org



The Long Distance Path (GR13) Via Algarviana connects Alcoutim to Cape Saint Vincent, stretching over about 300 kilometres and running inland across the entire Algarve region, from east to west, through the mountains, the craggy "barrocal" sub-region, the hills and part of the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Nature Park.

Since 2011, a set of complementary infrastructures has been implemented, increasing the diversity and attractiveness of this walking path. The "Via Algarviana" includes a network of 12 complementary Walking Paths, 10 Guided Audio Paths, 9 Connections and 4 Themed Routes.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Stay on the signposted paths;
- Do not litter;
- Do not take any plant samples or rocks with you;
- Do not damage any part of the natural or cultural heritage of these locations;
- Do not start any kind of fire;
- Avoid making excessive noise or disrupting the peace of these locations;
- Do not disturb the animals;
- Be polite to the locals.

Leave a green footprint: Pick up any non-organic waste you find along the way and dispose of it appropriately when you reach your destination.

ADVICE

- Before you start a hike, plan your trip and the itinerary you will follow.
- Always take water and supplies with you.
- Some routes take you across organisational, municipal and private hunting areas. For your safety, we suggest you take a fluorescent item of clothing with you, so that you are clearly visible to any hunters who may be operating in these areas. We also suggest that you ask locals whether any hunting events will be taking place on the day of your hike.

YEAR PUBLISHED: 2020

SIGNS TO FOLLOW

Short Distance Path



Change Direction



Short Distance Path (PR), which temporarily follows a route of a Long Distance Path (GR).



© FCMP

Organiser



Project



Financed by



Support



Partners

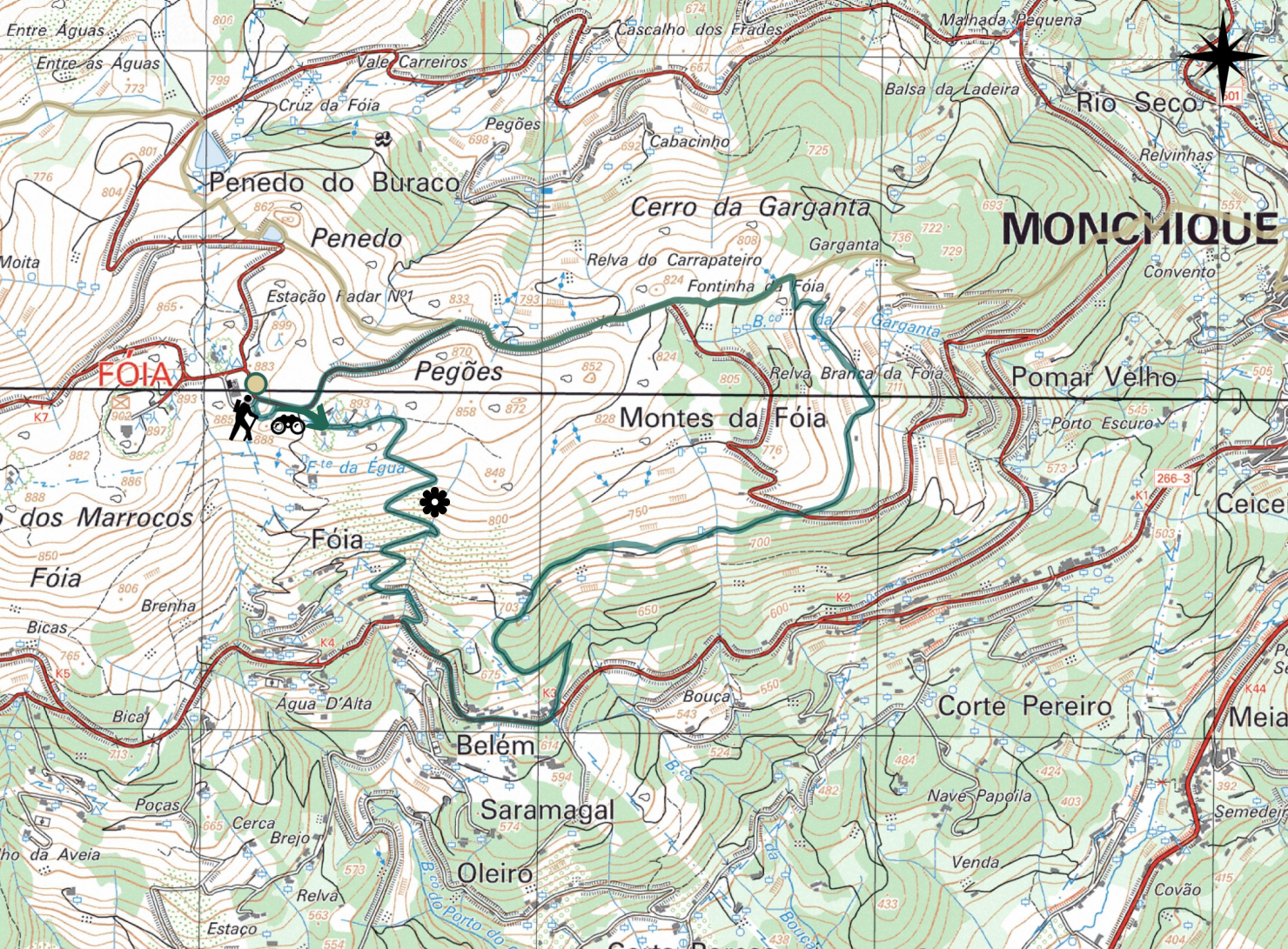


"TRILHO DA FÓIA" (Fóia Path)



PR3
MCQ





DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

The path starts in Fóia – the highest point in the Algarve. Follow the paved road, and when you reach a junction go straight ahead. The road will start to slope downwards towards the EN 266. This descent is surrounded by landscapes adorned with French lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*) ①, heather (*Erica spp*), gum rockrose (*Cistus ladanifer*), and the famous Pontic Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *Baeticum*), which is particularly easy to spot when in bloom. There's nowhere better to enjoy a superb view along the coastline! The last part of the descent takes you along a cobbled road. Be very careful to comply with common safety practices as you walk along the EN 266, as the road has a constant stream of traffic. This is the perfect place to take a break and refuel while you get ready to head back again.

The path will then veer left, taking you away from the paved road and onto a dirt track. Enjoy the vibrant greens of nature and the freshness of the air that surrounds you. You'll go past several terraces where you'll be able to spot animals grazing. The path will then intersect with the GR13 – Via Algarviana as you near the top of Fóia hill. On clear days, this spot boasts a breathtaking view over the entire Algarve and even parts of the Alentejo.

WHAT WILL I SEE?

FLORA

The Serra de Monchique, which is part of the Natura 2000 Network, is characterised as having the properties of a Mediterranean area with a strong Atlantic influence and high levels of rainfall. It is the climate in the region, particularly in areas with a higher altitude where levels of annual rainfall are over twice that experienced in most of the Algarve, that influences the unique flora, which differs greatly from the rest of the region's vegetation.

A botanical richness has therefore arisen as a result of these climatic conditions and the geological diversity present in these mountainous landscapes. Close to the top of the hills, rare species can be found such as Pontic Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *Baeticum*), *Paeonia broteroi* ② and the *Neotinea maculata* orchid, commonly found in woody areas.

The Atlantic influence over the area, which is commonly linked to a specific type of biogeography, has led to the Serra de Monchique being the south-westernmost point in which certain species and plant groups can be found in Europe. Proof of the strong Atlantic influence exerted on higher elevations within the Serra de Monchique lies in species such as the dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor* subsp. *Lusitanicus*) and mountain sandwort (*Arenaria montana* L.). Also noteworthy is the presence of plantain-leaved leopard's-bane (*Doronicum plantagineum*) in the understorey of the few remaining chestnut groves, the southernmost location in which it can be found in Portugal, as well as *Senecio lopeszii*, which, in Portugal, can only be found here although it is endemic to the southwest of the peninsula. Some specimens of Algerian oak (*Quercus canariensis*) can be found on cooler surfaces in the area. In Portugal, this tree only grows in the wild in mountainous landscapes such as the one found in Monchique, which has led to it being commonly known as the Monchique oak.

The current tree cover is predominantly made up of native cork oak formations and patches of pine and eucalyptus forests. Eucalyptus trees are mainly harvested to produce paper pulp. Strawberry trees can also be found in abundance between the cork oaks and pines.

TECHNICAL DATA SHEET

LOCATION: Region: Algarve; Municipality: Monchique; Civil Parish: Monchique.

ACCESSIBLE BY: Car: From the EN 125 national road, turn off onto the EN 266 and keep going until you reach Monchique. Then follow signs to Fóia on the EN 266-3.

STARTING AND FINISHING POINT: Fóia (N 37°18'53.11" W 8°35'44.21")

LENGTH: 6.80 km

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: Very Easy • Easy • Reasonably Hard • Hard • Very Hard

TIME REQUIRED (APPROXIMATE): 2h

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE: 892 m (starting point) **MINIMUM ALTITUDE:** 617 m (EN 266-3)

CUMULATIVE ELEVATION GAIN: 1078 m **CUMULATIVE ELEVATION LOSS:** 315 m

WATER AVAILABLE: Yes. **LOCAL CORNER SHOPS:** Yes.

RECOMMENDED SEASON: All year round, although springtime is the most beautiful due to the flowers being in bloom and having the most favourable weather conditions.

CARTOGRAPHY: Route mapped on Portuguese Military Maps Nos. 577 and 585, provided by the Army Geospatial Information Centre (CIGeoE), and with a scale of 1:10.000.



KEY

PR3 MCQ - "Trilho da Fóia" (6.80 km)

GR13 - "Via Algarviana" (Sector 11)

Monchique to Marmeleira (14.70 km)

Starting Point

Recommended Direction

Fóia Viewpoint

Flora that can be observed (Pontic Rhododendron = *Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *Baeticum*)

