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1. THE STORKS ARE BACK

You can see them all along the coast; all nests on top of factory chimneys, church towers, telephone poles and wagon wheels have been taken:



the storks are back. The storks' nests on the cliffs of Cabo Sardão are very special (and famous). You can look right into them, the storks are quite comfortable with that. You may well be too, provided you don't suffer from vertigo: if you want to see the nests, you must stand close to the edge of sheer cliffs and lean over countless meters of nothing. Alternatively, you can lie down on your belly. That's what we did.

2. VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES

If you are driving about anyway, it's fun to drive on into Vila Nova de Milfontes, the town of three lies: it was called a town before it even was a town; it's not new and you won't find a thousand wells there. However, it is the most popular Alentejan bathing resort, in the Mira estuary (top left). Apart from sitting on a coastal beach, you can sit on the banks of the river. The water is calmer and warmer here, but you must still take the tide into account. During the summer you can take the ferry across the Mira.



3. PORTUGUESE POTTERY

Are you inclined to stop at each pottery you come across? You'll find them anywhere, the shops that sell beautiful Portuguese pottery, for example in Cercal (picture). Part of it is hand-made; the rest is machine-produced. If you'd like to take a look behind the scenes and experience the entire process of pottery-making, decorating and glazing, all based on old traditions,



you must really pay a visit to Porches Pottery in Lagoa. All this will take a few hours. Care for a taste of what's in store for you? www.porchespottery.com

4. A MOORISH STOPPING PLACE



The Moors were calling the shots in southern Portugal from the 7th till the 12th century AD, when Silves was the capital. It was a period of peace and plenty. The cultivation of citrus fruits and rice, words starting with 'al', the liking for desserts and other sweets: they are all part of the Moorish inheritance.

Moorish architecture can still be found everywhere. Even 300 meters away from Monte do Casarão. There you can see the remains of a real Moorish building, two stories high and built in stone. Tradition has it that it served as a stopping place on the road to Silves.

5. TIME FOR MEDRONHO

Now is the time for medronho. The berries picked from the medronheiro or strawberry tree have been fermenting for months, and now distillation can commence. Our neighbour produces this liqueur in his own distillery. The fire is lit at five in the afternoon, and soon after that the first drops fall from the alembic. It's a very time-consuming and labour-intensive process that has to meet all kinds of standards as well.

Medronho can only be bought from the distiller, so it's rather exclusive. It's not exactly cheap, but really nice. Besides, a 'pinga' cleans the oesophagus. But that's hardly surprising, considering the abv in medronho varies from 45 to 60 percent.

