



Salir

a town of another Algarve



1. Circular thatched-roof barns (Moita Redonda)

Foreword

The white town of Salir, whose history is told in its castle's ruined walls, its legends of incantation and its revived traditions, also has a valuable natural patrimony from which excels the magnificent Rocha da Pena. These are points of interest with a strong potential to attract tourists who still have a lot to discover inland. In order to help them to choose and to travel over the paths of the Barrocal and the Serra, Almargem has published this brochure which is also welcome and supported by RTA (Tourism Region of Algarve), committed on showing the other face of the Al-Garb and convinced this publication will render a good service to the sector. Aiming at the development of inland Algarve, reducing the regional disparities and promoting the complementarity between the littoral and the interior, RTA has recently signed a protocol with the Region of Algarve Coordinating Commission and the Regional Department of Agriculture, under which many projects of cultural, social, economical and tauristical relevance to the most depressed areas of the Algarve, can be supported. We are thus convinced that many other initiatives of animation, equipment, qualification and promotion of inland Algarve will soon follow, provided with the necessary conditions to succeed. Meanwhile, we salute this publication of Almargem and we recall that alternatively to a day of exclusive dedication to the littoral sands and in complement to traditional seaside holidays, it is worth discover the secrets of the Serra and head out towards Salir.

Paulo Neves
President of RTA
Faro, September 1999



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Countercover: Views of the Castle and
Rocha da Pena

The territory



2. Nave do Barão

The Parish or Freguesia of Salir has 192 square kilometres, distributed mainly (79%) by the Serra and, further south, into Barrocal terrains (13%). The Beira Serra, narrow but important transition zone between those two big algarvian sub-regions, occupies here also a significant portion of the territory (8%).

The Barrocal is the realm of limestone and red clay soils, hills and plateaus covered with maquis, separated by deep depressions. The valley of the Algibre River (here called Ribeira de Salir), the magnificent *polje* or blind-valley of Nave do Barão, with its small tem-

porary lake, and the hills of Rocha da Pena (479m), Cabeça da Areia (377m), Passarinho (340m) and Picavessa (316m), are the main structural features of the landscape. Caves are abundant, the most famous of them being Algar dos Mouros, whose entrance lies on top of Rocha da Pena.

Rocha da Pena and Nave do Barão are truly natural monuments, sites of particularly remarkable landscape, geology and wild life.

The first one has been legally classified as a Natural Reserve.

Red sandstones, marls and vulcanic rocks testify the troubled geological history of the Beira Serra, that here includes the valleys of Alcaria, Besteiros, Brazeira and Freixo Seco. Good soils and plentiful water provided, since long time ago, the conditions for an intense occupation of these plains by agriculture and human habitation.

An endless range of shaly hills with rounded tops characterizes the Serra, divided in Salir's area in two main branches: Serra do Malhão, in the west, and Serra do Caldeirão further east. Vale

3. A view of Serra do Caldeirão



de Lobo (557m), Zebro (542m), Malhão (537m), Juncal (522m), Eira de Agosto (515m) and Negros (474m) are the most important peaks in a territory crossed by many streams and rivers. The sources of the Arade, Vascão, Foupana, Odeleite and Algibre (Rio Seco) rivers, five of the main water courses in the Algarve, can be found here.

Springs are frequent

in the Beira Serra and, in particular, around Rocha da Pena. We can also find excellent waters at the Serra, some of which have well recognized therapeutic value (e.g. Barranco do Velho).

The typical mediterranean climate offers the usual contrast between the dry season (June-September), with high temperatures (maxima of 35 - 40° C are

frequent in July and August), and the rainy season, with relatively mild temperatures (average of 10° C in January). However, some difference exists between the higher eastern zone of Serra do Caldeirão, where annual rainfall can reach 1100 mm, and the rest of the territory, with an average of 800 mm per annum.



The natural life

Productive and valuable orchards and fields are to be seen, mainly, in the Beira Serra valleys around Salir and in the Barrocal depressions, taking profit of abundant underground waters. In the Serra, only the valley beds near hamlets and villages are still cultivated and these only for family subsistence. Almost vanished are the corn fields that covered all the Serra some decades ago. Most of Barrocal slopes and plateaus are still occupied by the *pomar de sequeiro*, a mixed dry orchard of carob, olive, almond and fig trees,

husbanded with care by countless generations of people. Today, many of these orchards are left aside, being slowly reclaimed by wild life. In the Serra, the Cork Oak covers an extended area. In spite of the problems that afflict them, these *montados* still produce one of the best portuguese corks.

Natural vegetation is present in steeper slopes and in derelicted areas deserted by human activities, a

4. Sardinian Warbler



clear difference still present in this regard between Barrocal and Serra. Gum cistus covers, almost homogeneously, the poorest mountain soils. In wetter places grow the



5. Gum Cistus flower

Strawberry Tree and different species of heaths, gorses and brooms. In the Barrocal area, the first step in the process of recuperation of desertified soils is taken over by the Kermes Oak, which is gradually replaced by a very dense and aromatic scrub formed by bushes like the Wild Olive Tree, Mastic Tree, Strawberry Tree, Rosemary, Phoenician Juniper, Mediterranean Buckthorn, *Laurus-tinus* and many others.

This diversity of

habitats shelters a vast community of animals, from which birds are the most popular as they are easier observed. In the woods and scrubs of the Barrocal one can see the Sardinian Warbler, the Linnet and the Short-toed Tree-creeper. In the *Serra montados*, the Robin, the Crested Tit and the Green Woodpecker are common. Soaring over this vast region, in search of preys, the Buzzard and the Bonelli's Eagle can be seen. In limestone caves like the

one at Rocha da Pena, lodge great populations of bats, like the Lesser Mouse-eared Bat and the Schreiber's Bat, which share nocturnal airs with the Eagle Owl and other smaller owls. In big rivers, the queen of the night is the Otter, while over the hills the Fox, the Badger, the Wild Cat and the everyday more scarce Iberian Lynx hunt animals like the Red-legged Partridge, the Brown Hare, the Rabbit and the Wild Boar.

The history

The human colonization of Salir's region is very ancient. If little is known about the life of palaeolithic hunters which certainly used as shelters the limestone caves of the Barrocal, the presence of nomad shepherds and farmers from Neolithic times is confirmed through



6. Engraved stone with pre-roman inscriptions found at Salir

several archaeological remains. The megalithic culture also flourished here, two monuments of this period being known. The first permanent inhabitants of Salir enter the scene some 4 to 5 thousand years ago, when the present day Cerro do Castelo was first occupied. The ap-

proach of algarvian coasts by expeditions of east mediterranean peoples, brought to Salir new technologies and materials (copper, bronze), closely connected with the exploitation of the abundant mines in the Beira Serra.

Around 200 BC the Romans arrive at the Algarve, subjugating the Conians, people that under the influence of the neighbouring civilization of Tartessos, had introduced writing communication. From roman times exist in Salir, hence known as *Esuri*, remains of agricultural and mining activities. Nearby passed the roads that linked *Ossonoba* (Faro) to other cities of the Lusitania Province, providing Salir with an important role in the context of the well perfected system of roman routes. Little is known about the permanence at Salir of the Visigoths, arian people that invaded the Iberian Peninsula in the 5th century, but they surely maintained, as elsewhere, the civilizational models of the Romans they replaced.

The year AD 713 marks the beginning of Moslem domination in Salir,



7. Remains of habitation structures at Salir's Castle

with the victorious expedition of Abd al-Aziz to the southwest of the Visigothic Kingdom. From the 5 centuries of arab occupation, several are the remains, archaeological and, above all, cultural, that Salir and its people preserves. Beyond some scattered findings (coins, pottery, graves) the Castelo site has been, in recent years, the center of important discoveries. The moors of Salir, which they called *Castalar*, were shepherds of sheep and goats, diligently tilling, at the same time, the fertile lands of the valley.

In 1189, D. Sancho I conquered ephemerously Salir, but only half a century later, in an uncertain date

(1243-1246), D. Paio Peres Correia reestablished christian sovereignty over this castle. After the Reconquest, the strong town of *Sellir* lost all its strategic military value, bringing down to ruins the castle and the walls. Nevertheless, in the 16th century, Salir still was one of the most important villages of the county of Loulé, producing good cattle and corn. At that time, the title of Lord of Salir was a much praised distinction, being known as its holders some illustrious persons like D. Rodrigo de Aragão.

Salir also sustained an important role as a place of obligatory passage for those who travelled by land between the Algarve and Portugal Kingdoms. Salir was a true "dry port", where a toll was

due for every merchandise. Here passed also the Mail Road, covered by postmen and many travellers in their

journeys to Faro or Lisbon. This situation only changed by the end of the 19th century with the construction of

National Road 2 that, although passing through the Freguesia, does it far away from Salir.

The monuments

The most important monument of Salir is unquestionably its Castle, built at the 12th century by the Almohads. Standing still to this day are some turrets, portions of the walls and of the houses once built within.

Impressing is also the long wall that crosses north to south the top of Rocha da Pena. This fortification, together with another very similar one located westwards, already out of the Freguesia borders, was quite probably an almost impre-

gnable defensive place, used by Iron Age people.

The present day Mother Church, was built, probably in the 16th century, on a hill facing the castle to where the village meanwhile had spread. Consecrated to Saint Sebastian, this church encloses several 16th and 17th century images and vestments and a bull edicted by Pope Paul III (1550). The Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Pé da Cruz, placed near the Castle, also probably was built in the 16th century.



8. Castle's turret

Although much more recent, other important monuments of the Freguesia are the *Solar do Morgado*, a manor house from late 19th century that

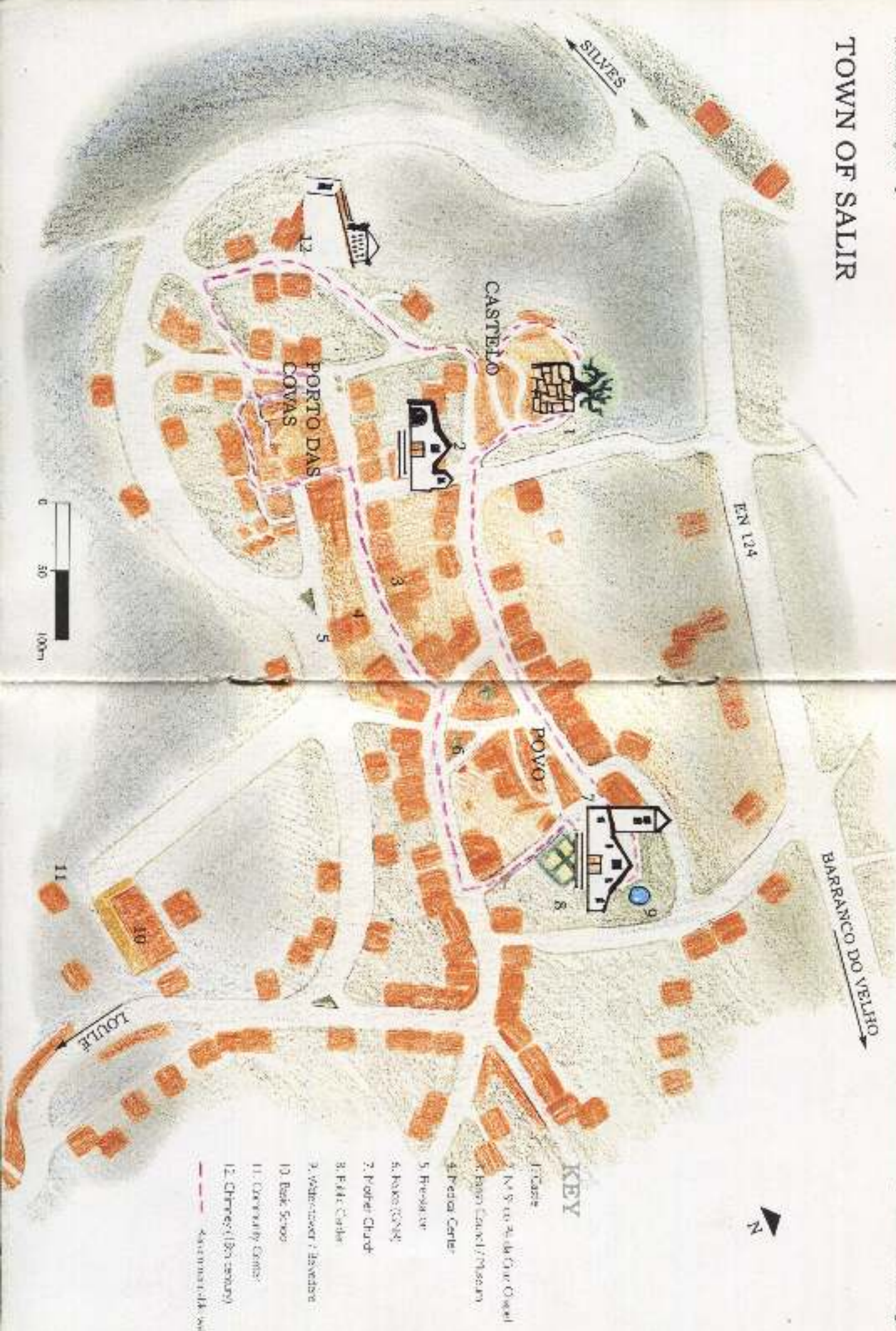
9. Neolithic wall at Rocha da Pena



10. Mother Church of Salir



TOWN OF SALIR



testifies the ancestry of the Lords of Salir, and the Chapel of Barranco do Velho, built in 1943 at the golden epoch of successful corn campaigns in the Serra.

Salir's rural and urban heritage is also particularly rich. One of the few windmills still functioning in the Algarve stands at Cu-meada, and many others can

be seen in ruins all over the Serra. We can also find watermills in good state of conservation at Ponte de Salir. The *noras* or chain bucket wells are very frequent at Beira Serra valleys. It's even possible to find more ancient types of water sweeps, called *cegonhas*, in the Serra, where fountains, sometimes of a very old origin, are also

abundant. Some hamlets and villages constitute true living exhibitions of traditional building models and methods, from ancient circular huts to chimneys, door and window stone trims and bread ovens. One beautiful 18th century chimney can, for instance, be admired at Porto das Covas, one of the older Salir urban nuclei.

The society

Important stronghold of moorish times, Salir continued as village and head of the Parish until 1993, recovering then its old title of

Vila, this time conceded by the Republican Parliament. At the 18th century, the Parish of Salir numbered some 1600 inhabitants, distributed over

75 hamlets and villages, the most important being Salir, Montes Novos, Rocha and Freixo Seco. In the middle of the 20th century, the Fre-

11. Montes Novos



12. Dried fruits on a terrace



13. Cork planks freshly removed



guesia reached a population of 6700 persons, scattered by many places. Montes Novos, Freixo Seco, Nave do Barão and Pena were then the greatest villages beyond Salir, which counted 450 residents shared already by three main urban nuclei: Castelo, Porto das Covas and Povo.

The distance from the big communication axis (railroad, national road) and the impoverishment of agriculture, led Salir to a period of great social and economical decadence, visibly expressed in the massive

exodus of people to the big littoral centers or to foreign countries, in search of better conditions of life. In the beginning of the 90s, the population of the Freguesia of Salir approached 4500 persons.

Agriculture that, for centuries, was the most outstanding economical activity, employs today only 22% of the population. Main local revenues come from the production of dry fruits (carob, almond) and cork, followed by olives and cattle.

The secondary and tertiary sectors employ the majority of active popu-

lation, but almost always outside of the Freguesia. This situation has been facilitated over the last years by an improvement of access roads, transforming Salir into a small dormitory of the more developed urban centers in Algarve's littoral. Nevertheless, and in spite of the scarce employment they offer, a few dozens of industrial establishments do exist in Salir, some of excelling quality, specially in the sectors of alimentation (bakery, traditional sausages), drinks (production of liquors) and wood works (carpentry).

Trade and services are the sectors that grew more in the last few years, with emphasis in the areas of restauration, touristic lodgement and, of course, public services. The town of Salir is nowadays provided with a Basic School (9 years of scholarship), Community Center, Medical Center, police headquarters (GNR), fire-station, pharmacy, banks, a library/museum (Museum José Viegas Gregório) and a sports complex (soccer field, tennis court, pools).



The traditions

There is no better occasion to know the traditional activities of Salir than to visit the town during the *Festa da Espiga* (Spike Festival), which always takes place on the sixth Thursday after Easter (municipal holiday of the County of Loulé). On that occasion, all hamlets try to show off the best of their past and the best they can offer to the visitor.

Activities like the tillage, preparation and weaving of flax, the grinding of cereals in the typical wind or water mills and the pressing of olives in the traditional oil factories, have been disappearing in our greedy modern society.

Nevertheless, in this parish there are still some artisans who manufacture good osier and cane baskets, various palm, esparto as well as tin objects, no longer to be used in the daily agricultural work but for touristic purposes. Other traditions that still remain are the production of honey, she-goat

and ewe cheese, *aguardente de medronho* (spirit made of the fruit from the strawberry tree), sausages and other derivatives from the pig slaughter.

The local gastronomy is quite rich and original. Besides the substantial chickpeas, beans, potato, cabbage and home-bred cockerel stews, one of the most appreciated courses is *xerém*, maize food usually eaten with fried fish. Summer is the time to try *arjamolho*, a kind of cold watered tomato salad. During the hunting season, the traditional menu is enriched with other courses such as hare ragout and partridge or wild boar stews. For dessert, there are plenty of fig, almond and *gila* cakes (*morgado*, D. Rodrigo) and the ancestral *bolo de faca*. To go with all these delicacies, it is usual to drink locally produced wines, like *vinho da Nave*,



14. Festa da Espiga: ethnographic march

whose origins go back to the Middle Ages.

Besides *Festa da Espiga*, Salir offers to the visitor the *Feira da Rata* (jumble market) which always takes place on the first Sunday of each month, the January Fair (on the 25th of that month)

15. Making esparto-baskets (Pena)



which occurred for the first time in 1929, the May Fair which began in the 40s and takes place on the 4th of May and the September Fair which started two centuries ago and

still takes place on the 14th of September each year.

With regards to religious festivities, Salir fosters, on the third Sunday of February the Saint Louis and

Saint Sebastian Feast, also called *Festa das Chouriças* (Sausages Feast), and on the second or third Sunday of August the *Nossa Senhora do Pé da Cruz* Feast.

Agenda

ACCOMODATIONS

Ameijoafra - Casa da Mãe (289489179).

Barranco do Velho - Pensão A Tia Bia (289846425).

RESTAURANTS

Salir - A Varanda (289489405); A Tasquinha do Fonseca (289489570);

Churrasqueira Papagaio Dourado (289489609); Mouro Bar (289489458).

Jardim - Esplanada Jardim (289489180).

Barranco do Velho - A Tia Bia (289846425).

Cortelha - Casa dos Presuntos (289846184); Café Cortelha (289846179).

Montes Novos - Café Largo da Bica* (289846129).

Nave do Barão - Café Barão* (289489277).

Tameira (Freixo Seco de Cima) - Abrigo dos Caçadores (289489263).

Portela do Barranco - A Medronheira (289489250).

Malhão - Mira Mar* (289489796); O Malhão (289489877).

* Light meals through previous booking

PUBS

Salir - Largo Bar (289489318).

Beirada - Beirada Bar (289489910).

HANDICRAFT

Salir - Casa da Serra (289489299); António Rodrigues do Rosário (289489115).

Barranco do Velho - Lojinha da Serra (289846183).

TRANSPORTS

Bus - EVA Transportes SA, daily buses Loulé-Salir (289416655).

Taxi - Salir (289489127); Loulé (289414488).

Petrol stations - Salir, Cortelha, Barrosas.

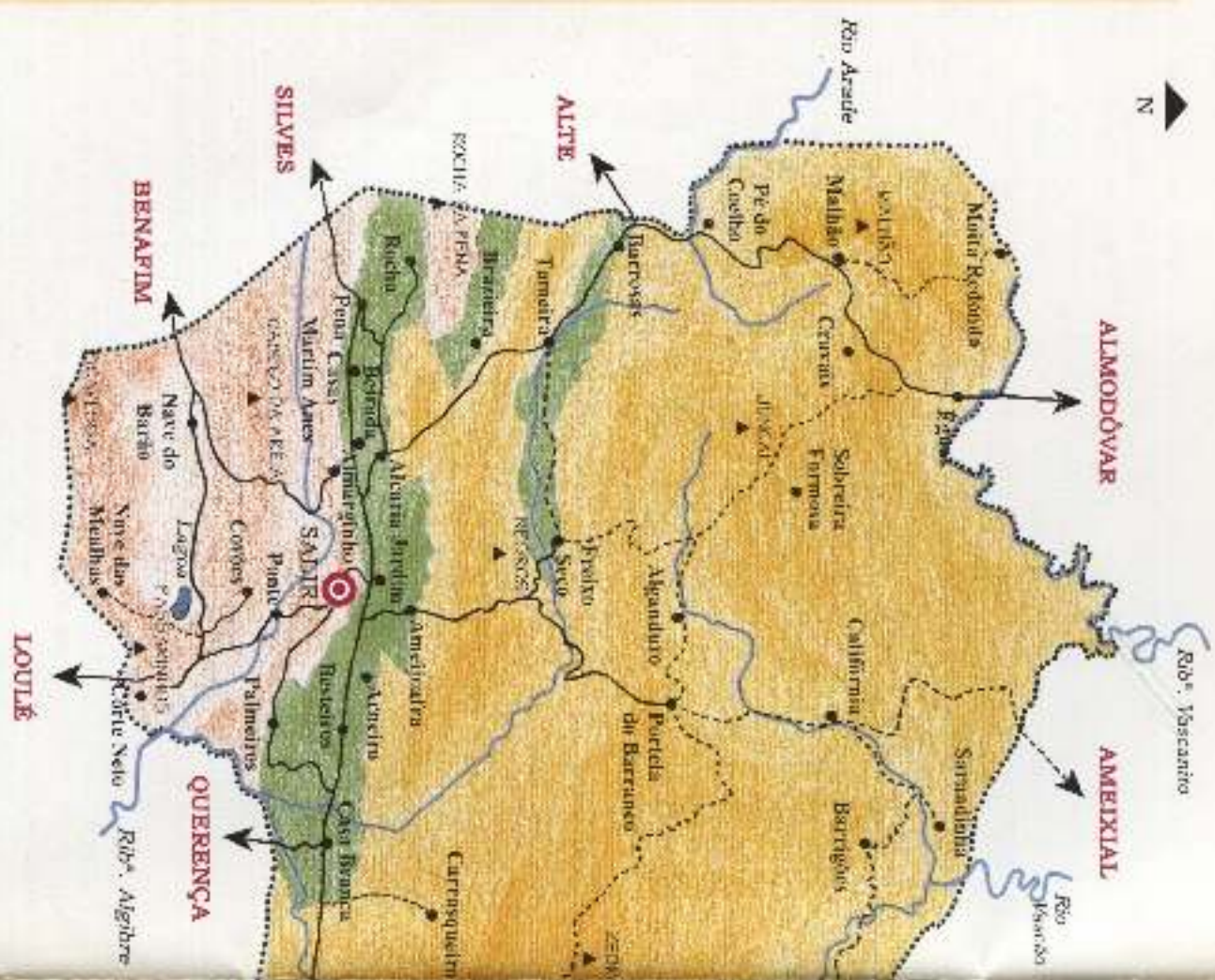
OTHER USEFUL

CONTACTS

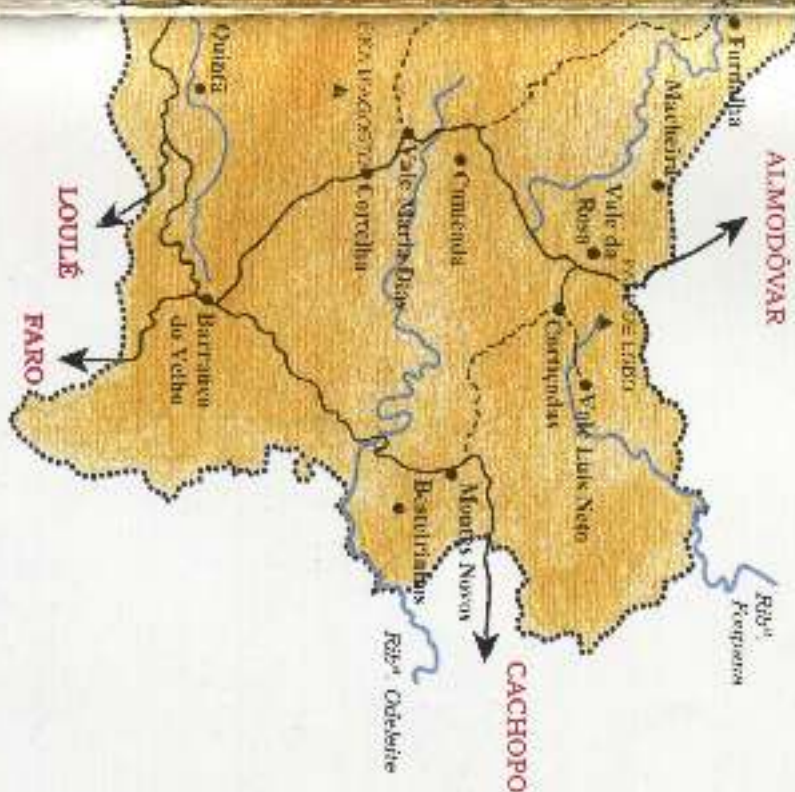
SOS (112); Parish Council of Salir (289489119); Police (GNR), Salir (289489136); Medical Center, Salir (289489200); Municipal Fire-brigade (289416702); Post Office, Salir (289489289); Pharmacy, Salir (289489343).

Further information -

Centro Ambiental da Pena (289489849); Centro Brito de Carvalho (289489532).



PARISH OF SALIR



*Hiding on the top of Rocha da Pena,
the Muslim king saw the Christians taking over the castle of Salir
where unfortunately
his beloved daughter had been locked in.
Desperately,
he casted a spell so that nobody could touch her.
And still to this day there are people who can ear the poor princess,
one of the most beautiful of the Islam,
crying throughout the ruins of the ancient Castalar.*



SUPPORT



Município de Faro
Turismo e Cultura

Centro Rural de Salir



Região de Turismo do Algarve