

# VISIT

SINES & PORTO COVO

**Sines**  
MUNICÍPIO



### Sines Municipality

**Location:** Alentejo's Littoral, Portugal (150km south of Lisbon)

**Area:** 202,7km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 15,000 inhabitants

**Towns and villages:** Sines, Porto Covo

**Climate:** Mediterranean, moderated by the ocean influence

**Economy:** commerce and services, ports, polymer industry, digital sector, fishing and tourism



# Welcome to Sines

Welcome to Sines and Porto Covo

# HISTORY

The culture, the character and the economy of the people of Sines were, from Prehistory to modern times, shaped by the sea.

Sines has been a place of attraction for human communities since Prehistory. Visited by Celts and Carthaginians, under the power of Rome Sines and the Pessegueiro Island became centres of fish salting industries and the most important ports of the region. The most probable origin of the word Sines is Roman: "sinus" - bay.

Evolving as a small fishing community, King D. Pedro I granted the charter to Sines on the 24th of November 1362, interested in its strategic position for the defence of the coast. In return for the administrative autonomy, the people of the new district built the Castle, the most important monument in Sines.

Around 1469, one of the greatest figures in universal history, the navigator Vasco da Gama, was born in Sines.

On the presumption that a fishing harbour and a commercial harbour were to be built nearby, the village of Porto Covo was founded in the end of the 18th century (the ports were never built).

During the first two thirds of the 20th century, fishing, cork industry and tourism remained the basis of the economic life of the district. Around 1970, its deep sea, among other factors, led to the choice of Sines for the establishment of harbouring and industrial facilities.



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# BEACHES FOR EVERYONE

## FAMILY BEACHES

The main beaches in the Sines area are permanently manned with lifeguards during the bathing season, provided with appropriate facilities and maintain excellent standards of cleanliness. The beaches of Vasco da Gama, S. Torpes, Vale Figueiros, Praia Grande do Porto Covo and Ilha do Pessegueiro are known for their natural qualities and infrastructures.

## THE COSY BEACHES OF PORTO COVO

There are no beaches like the beaches of Porto Covo, one of the prettiest villages in Portugal, located on one of the most beautiful coastlines. The Praia Grande and Praia da Ilha beaches are large and easily accessible. The whole coastline is rich in small cosy beaches of fine sand and clear water, separated by large rocks that seem as if they have been deliberately placed there to create a feeling of intimacy and seclusion. The beaches belong to everybody, but it is tempting to say: "choose your own!" - Oliveirinha, Foz, Burrinho, Samoqueira, Pequena, Espingardeiro and Buizinhos are some of the names of these treasures, as precious as they are small. All these beaches are of the best quality in terms of standards of cleanliness, but access to some of them is difficult and not all of them are permanently manned by lifeguards.

## NUDIST BEACHES

Salto is one of the smallest beaches in the Porto Covo area. It has an atmosphere of privacy and tranquillity. Since 2002 it has been one of a few nudist beaches officially recognised in Portugal.





## HISTORIC BEACHES

The beaches of Sines have more to offer than sun and sea. They also offer history and soul:

### ■ **Vasco da Gama Beach**

Located inside the city of Sines and witness to the main events of its history (from pirate attacks to D. Miguel's departure to exile), this beach is part of the face of Sines and part of the heart of its residents. Located next to the fishing port, it is as charming as ever and is well worth visiting in both summer and winter. The promenade is a popular place for walks and jogging.

### ■ **S. Torpes Beach**

The most popular beach in the district is closely associated with the legend of St Torpes, whose martyred body is said to have washed up on the sands in the 1st Century CE. "São Torpes Raft" is a naval archaeological curiosity.

### ■ **Pessegueiro Island beach**

The Carthaginians and the Romans used the Pessegueiro Island Canal as a port of shelter on the difficult northward journey along the Alentejo coast. Remains of a Roman salt fish plant were found on the island. (The island takes its name from "piscis", meaning fish, rather than from peach tree, the meaning of the Portuguese word, pessegueiro). At the end of the 16th Century, plans were made to use the island as a great seaport (some of the blocks used to begin construction can still be seen).

## EVASION BEACHES

The Sines Cape divides the Alentejo coastline into two halves. To the south, lie small beaches separated by rocks. To the north, stretch kilometre after kilometre of unbroken sandy beaches, extending as far as the Troia peninsula. This area represents a completely different way of visiting and enjoying the beach. It is an area of big spaces and energetic seas. Because of the rough seas and deep waters, the coast to the north of Sines is not suited to bathing, but it offers great enjoyment for those who like solitary walks and the excitement of the elements.









# SEA AND NATURE

## Protected riches

Sines is located on one of the best-preserved coastlines in Europe. The southern part of the Sines Municipality forms part of the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Nature Park, which extends from São Torpes to the Algarve. The landscape includes steep cliffs, small beaches, dune systems, streams, marshes and hills.

## Enjoying the sea: surfing, windsurfing, body-boarding, fishing, diving, boating...

São Torpes is a paradise for the region's surfers. Its surf schools are open all year and offer lessons for all ages and levels. Almost the whole district is suitable for rod fishing. There is a wide variety of locations to choose from for diving and underwater fishing. In the summer, Pessegueiro Island and other seaside areas can be visited by boat.

## Adventure and nature sports

By foot, bicycle or jeep, the inlands of the Sines Municipality abound in interesting places to visit, from the almost secret Sancha Lagoon, in the north of the district, to the rural areas at Cabeça da Cabra, Provença and Sonega. The southern end of Sines municipality is part of the Rota Vicentina ([www.rotavicentina.com](http://www.rotavicentina.com)), a network of walking trails in SW Portugal. The Atlantic exuberance and the geological richness of the North Coast can be enjoyed via a boardwalk.

## Sines Marina

Sines is a very important stopping point for leisure vessels sailing along the Portuguese coast on national or international routes. Sines Marina ([www.marinasines.pt](http://www.marinasines.pt)) is sheltered by a breakwater and has capacity for 182 vessels.

## Nautical Station of Sines

The Nautical Station of Sines is constituted by a network of quality nautical tourist offer. It includes the offer of accommodation, restaurants, nautical activities and other activities and services relevant to the attraction of tourists and other users, adding value and creating diverse and integrated experiences. Know more at [nautical.sines.pt](http://nautical.sines.pt).





# MONUMENTS OF VASCO DA GAMA



The navigator Vasco da Gama (ca. 1469-1524), discoverer of the Maritime Way to India, is one of the major figures of the Portuguese and world history. He was born in Sines and it was the county of Sines that, to the end of his life, he wanted as a reward for his deed. It is possible to draw a route in the city of Sines following the monuments of Gama. That route begins in the Castle, passes down the Mother Church, stops in the Statue of Vasco Gama and ends in the Church of Nossa Senhora das Salas.

## THE CASTLE

Supposing that his father, Estêvão, was already alcaide of the town in 1468/1469, the second floor of the donjon may be, as suggested by historian Arnaldo Soledade, the place in Sines where the navigator was born (tradition points to a house on the present Rua - Street - Vasco da Gama). There is no doubt that he spent his childhood here and that the monument is full of memories and traces of the Gamas. However, not even that was needed to make it the most important monument of Sines. Built in the first half of the 15th century, in the most noble and strategic point of the city, hanging over the bay, the Castle - a defensive fortress - was the condition imposed by King D. Pedro I to grant the charter to Sines, in 1362. Today, it no longer defends the city from the pirates, but remains the most amazing belvedere to the bay. For its connection to the navigator's life, the main tower of the Castle hosts, since 2008, the "House of Vasco da Gama".



## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF SÃO SALVADOR

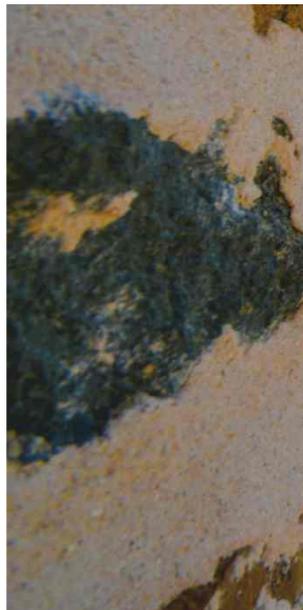
The Mother Church of São Salvador is practically leaning against the east wall of the Castle. It was here (that is, in the early building of the church) that, at 11 or 12 years old, with three of his brothers, Vasco da Gama received the first tonsure and became a member of the Order of Santiago. In the 18th century, the medieval church, already too small for the number of believers that wanted to go to mass, had to be completely transformed, acquiring its present look, typical of the baroque of King João's time. Inside, behold carefully the high altar with a shrine of the Holy Sacrament, the azulejos of the chancel, the images of St. John the Baptist, of Nossa Senhora da Graça, of Santa Catarina and of Senhor Jesus das Almas and the panel in the ceiling, painted by Emmerico Nunes.

## STATUE OF VASCO DA GAMA

Twenty metres south of the Mother Church, close by the south west tower of the Castle, is the statue of Vasco da Gama, sculpted by António Luís Branco de Paiva. Inaugurated in 1970, still on the occasion of the celebrations of the navigator's 500th anniversary, it was a population claim since at least 1898 (the 400th anniversary of the Discovery of the Maritime Way to India). Looking at the Atlantic, in a place of insurmountable beauty, it can be said that the best view of Sines is the one of its most famous child.

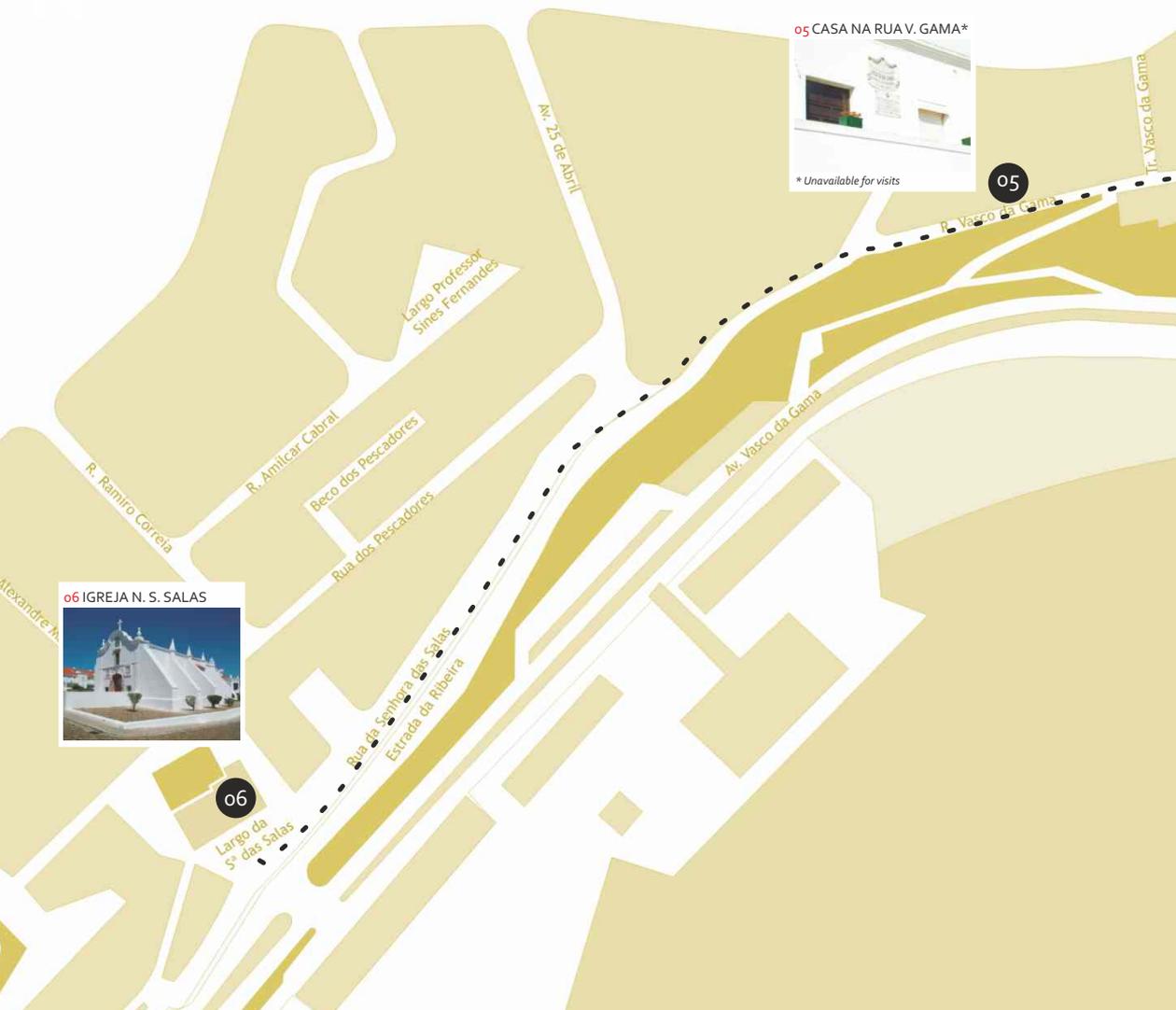
## CHURCH OF NOSSA SENHORA DAS SALAS (AND TREASURE)

The route of Vasco da Gama ends in the west side of the city, in the "modern" Church of Nossa Senhora das Salas, which replaced the original church built, in the beginning of the 14th century, by Dona Betaça, maid of honour of D. Isabel (to be married with King Dinis). Perhaps to celebrate the success of the voyage to India, Vasco da Gama decided to rebuild the chapel completely, in the 16th century. Notwithstanding the opposition of the Order of Santiago, the work progressed, and two memorial stones that show the position of the navigator are placed close by the gateway of the new temple: "This house of Nossa Senhora das Salas was built by the most magnificent Dom Vasco da Gama". Inside the temple, behold carefully the high altar in golden carving with an image of Nossa Senhora das Salas (17th century), the panel of azulejos alluding to the life of Mary and the retable of Senhor do Vencimento. Its magnificent treasure is open to visitors since 2006.





# ROUTE OF VASCO DA GAMA



05 CASA NA RUA V. GAMA\*



\* Unavailable for visits

05

06 IGREJA N. S. SALAS



06

Largo da  
S<sup>a</sup> das Salas

03 IGREJA MATRIZ



02 MUSEU DE SINES



02

01

01 CASTELO



04

04 ESTÁTUA DE V. GAMA



# HISTORIC CENTRES

## SINES' HISTORIC CENTRE

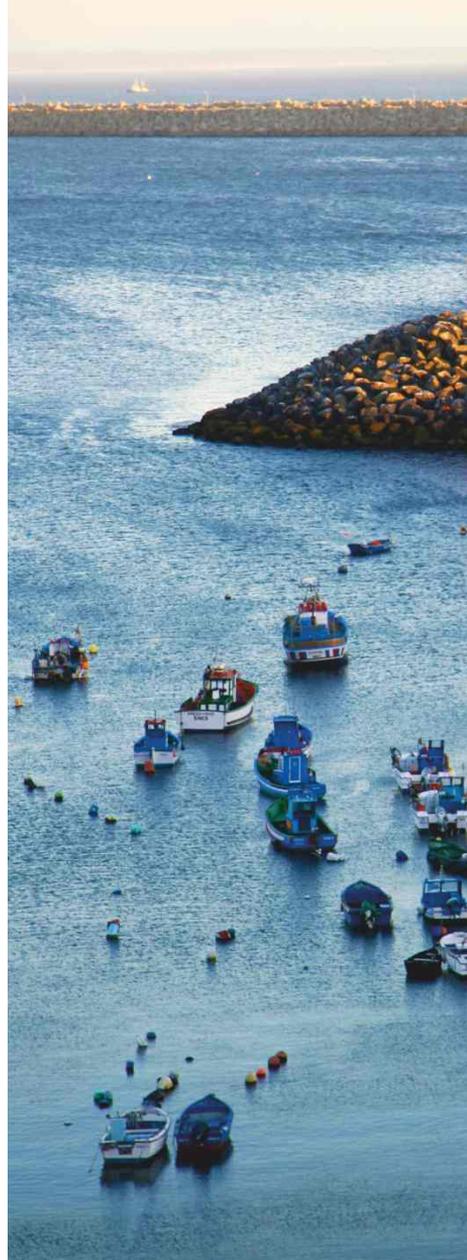
Sines' historic centre goes along the cliff, from the Castle to the Fortress of Revelim. Besides the magnificent views to the Atlantic in all its length, we must highlight, among the Sines' historic centre points of interest, the shopping streets around the ancient medieval axis (Rua Cândido dos Reis and Rua Teófilo Braga), the Largo dos Penedos (with the ancient "atalaia", where fishermen watched the sea) and Rua Vasco da Gama, where the manor house that caused his expulsion from Sines was supposed to be, or even, if we trust tradition, the house where Vasco da Gama was born (Note: the house is presently a private residence, not open to visitors). Working as a gate between the old and the new city, don't miss the amazing building of the Centro de Artes de Sines (Sines' Arts Centre).

## FISHING LAND

The history of Sines was, until 40 years ago, the history of a fishing town. Nowadays, fishing continues to employ hundreds of people and to give the bay of Sines a charm and colouring unique in Alentejo. Before or after your meal, in summer or in winter, a visit to the fishing harbour and to the marginal avenue of Beach Vasco da Gama may be an incursion to the emotional centre of the city.

## PORTO COVO

Largo Marquês de Pombal (Square Marquês de Pombal), one of the wonders of Portuguese popular architecture, inspired in the model of Marquês de Pombal in downtown Lisbon, keeps almost intact the outline of the 18th century and it is an obligatory visiting space.





# TREASURES AND MUSEUMS

## MUSEUM OF SINES

The main nucleus of Sines' museum is installed in the Castle of Sines since 2008. Among other objects, the main nucleus of the museum shows the most significant archaeological riches of the municipality, from the Carthaginian Treasure of the Gaio to the carved stones probably taken from a 7th century Visigoth basilica. Memories and objects that document the life in Sines during the 20th century are also on display. The Castle's vault (*casa-forte*) shows a rich collection of coins and precious objects. The House of Vasco da Gama, located in the Castle's main tower, shows the biography of the famous navigator, the spaces where he lived and the contributions of his pioneering voyages to the shaping of modern world.

## FISH PRESERVING FACTORY

Of the five Roman fish preserving factories excavated in Sines, the one in best condition was restored and transformed into an extension of the museum. The structure is located near the Castle eastern wall.

## TREASURE OF SALAS CHURCH

The Treasure of Salas Church, open in 2006, shows dozens of jewels and ornaments donated throughout the centuries to the statue of the Virgin Mary. The display also exhibits treasures coming from the different lost religious monuments in Sines. This is the case of the St. António monastery and the Santa Catarina chapel - the latter having been destroyed when the industrial site was built.





# CENTRO DE ARTES DE SINES

Centro de Artes de Sines (Sines' Arts Centre) offers four different facilities in a single building, designed by the prize-winning Atelier Aires Mateus: an Art Gallery, the Municipal Library, an Auditorium with 175 seats and the Historical Municipal Archives. Inaugurated in 2005, the centre works as a bridge between the old and the modern parts of the city. Its bold, innovating architecture makes it a notable contemporary monument in Sines and one of the best examples of contemporary Portuguese architecture, having been selected for the European Mies van der Rohe Award.



# FESTIVAL MÚSICAS DO MUNDO

Festival Músicas do Mundo (FMM Sines) has been organised by the Municipal Council of Sines since 1999. It is the most important cultural event of the year in Sines and one of the most important world music festivals in Europe. The festival is held, every year, at the end of July, against the backdrop of the Castle's historical scenery, as well as in other venues in the municipality.

With a programme and a spirit that allows joining every kind of audiences to enjoy good music, it is a festival that manages to be at the same time youthful and for the family.

For further information, go to: [www.fmmSines.pt](http://www.fmmSines.pt)





## SINES CARNIVAL

Sines is one of the Portuguese cities with the greatest carnival tradition. Every year, thousands of people come from all parts of the country to see the local Carnival. Recognised at a national level since the first decades of the 20th century, the Carnival of Sines combines the satiric spirit and the creativity of the Portuguese people with the splendour and the energy of the Carnival in Brazil to create a vibrating show in which the whole city is involved.

## COLLECTIVE CULTURE

The cultural life of Sines has the important contribution of its associations.

In the performing arts, **Teatro do Mar** organises M.A.R. – Mostra de Artes de Rua, a street arts festival featuring a selection of Portuguese and international companies.

The arts school **Escola das Artes do Alentejo Litoral** is devoted to music and other cultural activities.

**Associação Recreativa de Dança Sineense** holds several salon and Latin American dances events.

Associations in Sines and Porto Covo dedicate themselves to various **handcrafts**.

# RELIGIOUS FESTIVITIES

The celebrations in honour of the local fishermen's patroness, Nossa Senhora das Salas, take place on the 14th and the 15th of August. The religious procession winds its way through the historic centre of Sines (on the night of 14th August) and down by the sea (on 15th August during the daytime). The latter procession makes use of the fishermen's trawlers, rightly decorated. This is one of the celebrations' highlights.

Porto Covo's patroness, Nossa Senhora da Soledade, is celebrated on the 29th of August. The people carry the statue of the saint through the main streets of the village in a religious procession. The religious celebrations go hand in hand with the cultural commemorative programme held in the parish.





## GASTRONOMY

Among the reasons for visiting Sines, the quality of its food is one of the most important. It would be difficult to leave any of the many restaurants in the area without a feeling of satisfaction, especially as most of them combine the pleasure of fine food with stunning views over the ocean.



Fish and shellfish are at the heart of the traditional local cuisine, which always uses fresh ingredients, especially fish straight from the local fishing ports. Dishes such as “açorda de marisco” (shellfish with a bread porridge) and “feijoada de búzios” (whelk bean stew) are typical examples of the influence of the Alentejano hinterlands on the local cuisine, resulting in an irresistible combination of flavours from the coast and from the plain.



Although the main elements of Sines cuisine are seafood products in all their forms - served hot, in salads or in hors d'oeuvres - the regional cakes known as “Vasquinhos” - small almond cakes named after Vasco da Gama, the great navigator who was born in Sines - should not be missed.

### TASQUINHAS

The food festival Tasquinhas Sines is held in July near the beach Vasco da Gama.

# SPORTS

## MULTIPURPOSE PAVILION

Sines' Multipurpose Pavilion is one of the most modern sports pavilions in southern Portugal. This facility is prepared for a diverse range of indoors sports and for music shows, fairs and congresses.

## SWIMMING POOL CARLOS MANAFAIA

With a nautical-inspired architecture, the swimming pool Carlos Manafaia, located in Sines, is one of the best in Alentejo.

More sports facilities at [www.sines.pt](http://www.sines.pt).



# CONTACTS

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## **Ficha Técnica**

Textos, fotografias e arranjo gráfico: Câmara Municipal de Sines

Impressão: Sersilito

Tiragem: 2000 exemplares

Edição: Câmara Municipal de Sines, 2026

Further information at

[www.sines.pt](http://www.sines.pt)



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