

# FISHING VILLAGES

*of the Western Algarve*

*Gentes  
d'mar*  
~



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## GENTES D'MAR

The fishing communities of the Western Algarve coastal villages are important reservoirs of a collective memory linked to historical heritage, values, identity, traditional occupations and sustainable economic activities.

In addition to these important territorial identity traits, which are mostly unexplored or unexploited as income sources, there is a latent growing potential waiting to be used by these fishing communities.

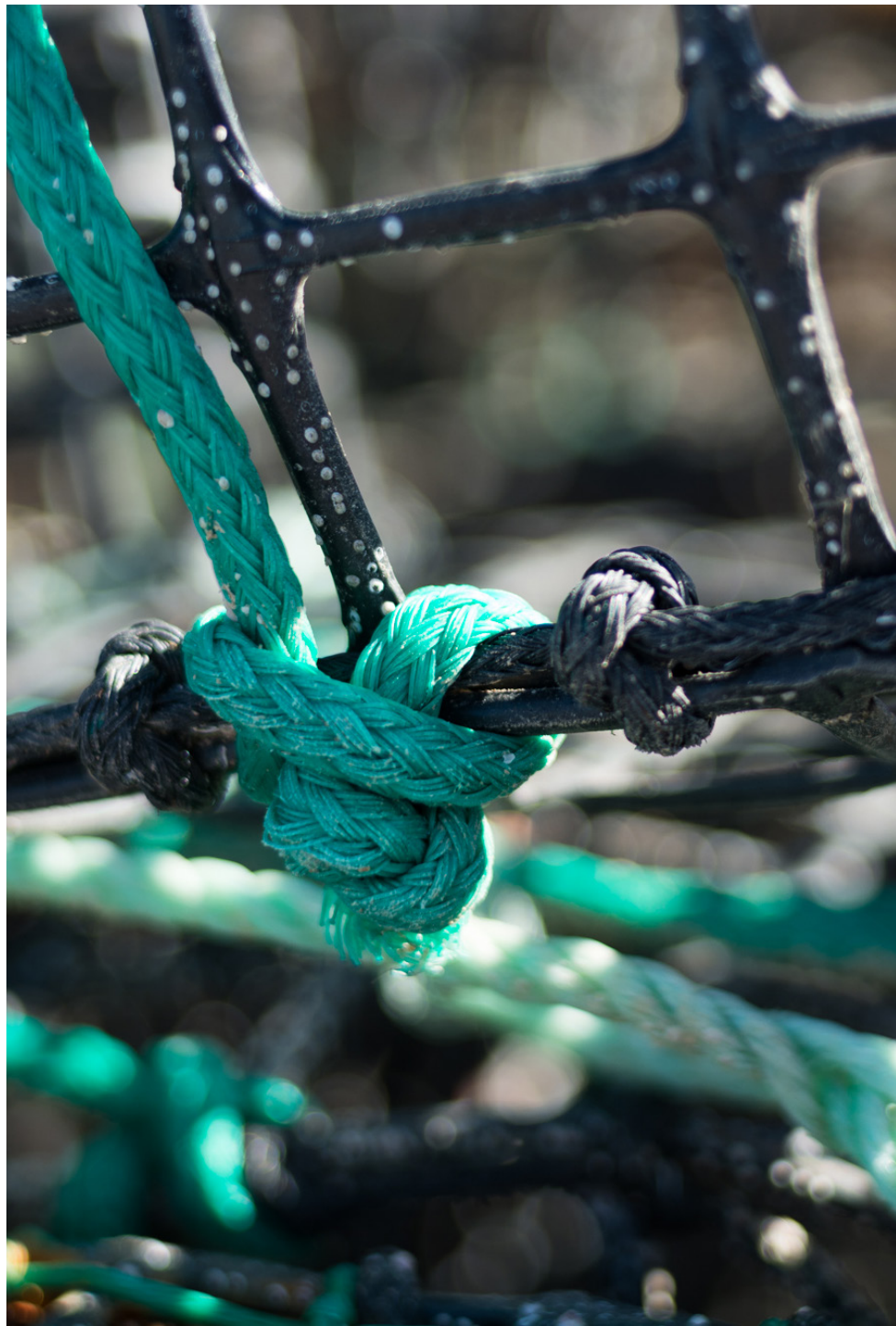
Combined with a tourism segment that uses natural and cultural heritages in a sustainable manner, the promotion of these "Fishing Villages" (the designation for settlements exhibiting influence of fishing communities) encourages for their conservation and raises

ecological awareness through environmental interpretation.

In this regard, the project aims to create conditions to promote the sustainability of local fisheries. Moreover, within a scenery of shortage in fishing resources, it will provide tools to help the development of complementary activities; thus, it values the environment and local communities' quality of life, while encouraging them to offer to tourists new products and activities promoted by the fishing communities - and for their own benefit.

The project aims to encourage research on complementary activities related to fisheries and coastal sustainability, based on a "fishing village tourism" model with a focus on the sea.

José Moura Bastos  
"Gentes de Mar" Project Coordinator





## INTRODUCTION

Gentes de Mar Project is a partnership between Agência de Desenvolvimento do Barlavento (ADB) and the Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR, Centro de Ciências do Mar do Algarve), of the University of Algarve. This project aims to promote and to value the cultural and natural heritage of the Western Algarve coastline, encouraging its preservation as a way to enhance local tourism through sustainable practices. The project will develop promotional actions about the region and its products in local, national and European contexts.

Among other activities, it includes the production and release of the following publications: "Underwater Routes of the Western Algarve", "Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve", and the current work, "Fishing Villages of the Western Algarve".

The first two guides are focused on coastal and marine biodiversity and maritime touristic activities whereas the present one aims to value the cultural essence of these villages, especially of fishing communities. By briefly portraying these communities' origins, while contrasting them with their current status, we hope to have picked up some of their deep maritime soul and to introduce another side of our Algarve with its wealth on traditions.

With the exception of the coastal towns of Lagos, Portimão and Albufeira, these "Itineraries" were designed to include all the coastal villages of the Western Algarve, namely: Olhos d'Água, Armação de Pera, Senhora da Rocha, Benagil, Carvoeiro, Ferragudo, Alvor, Praia da Luz, Burgau, Salema, Sagres, Carrapateira and Arrifana.

The Itineraries were carried out following two procedures:

- a) A bibliographic research, especially on general history and geography writings and those related to fisheries — e.g., the works of Baldaque da Silva, late 19th century, and Dorilio Seruca, in the late 20th century;
- b) Interviews carried out with the chair persons of fishermen's associations (Armação de Pera, Senhora da Rocha, Benagil, Ferragudo, Alvor, Sagres and Arrifana) and with local fishermen, contacted on fishing harbours, points of sale or on the beach.

The information was organized in order to introduce the villages from their historical context, always connected with the sea, fisheries and, more recently, tourism. We sum up the current status on the fisheries sector with data regarding the number of ships, active fishermen, the main fishing gears and target species. Then, we proceed into habits and customs, beginning with local cuisine and typical dishes, and closing with annual celebrations. Afterwards, we give a review on the associations capabilities, with information on facilities, community activity and main aspirations of local fishermen. Finally, and to frame your visit, we stress the main points of interest.



# WESTERN











## OLHOS D'ÁGUA

Olhos d'Água is a fishing village in the municipality of Albufeira. It retains a rich history, dating back to the Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans. Back in those days, fishing and fish processing (such as salting and drying) called many people into this place. It got its name from the freshwater springs sprouting on the shore — locally called *olheiros*. These springs emerge even from the sea floor outside the tidal zone.

Since the beginning of the last century (especially since the second half) many people began to flock to Olhos d'Água. First, they came for sea bathing and its claimed positive effects on health. Later, they came in looking for a new tourism concept, with plenty of sunny beaches.

In 2000, the village had 18 registered fishing boats (including 3 coastal boats) and 49 registered seafarers. It was a little more than the

current 6 boats and near 15 active fishermen. The nearest fish auction market, Docapesca, is 6 km away, in Albufeira, which is 3 km away from the one in Quarteira. Boats are beached with a winch; there is a boat ramp and support facilities for storing fishing gear.

The most common fishing gears are pots, gill nets, trammel nets and there is also a seine vessel. Multi-purpose fishing mainly catches octopus, sea bream, gilt-head bream, red mullet, black sea bream and two-banded seabream; the seine vessel catches the common pelagic fish of the Algarve coast, such as sardines, mackerel, horse-mackerel and sometimes anchovies, bonito, bluefish and Atlantic mackerel.

The main dishes of this fishing community are: grilled fresh fish, squid stew (*caldeirada*), steamed octopus, octopus salad, octopus egg salad, corn porridge (*xarém*) with cockles and fried fish, skinned horse mackerel (*carapaus alimados*) and fried moray eel.

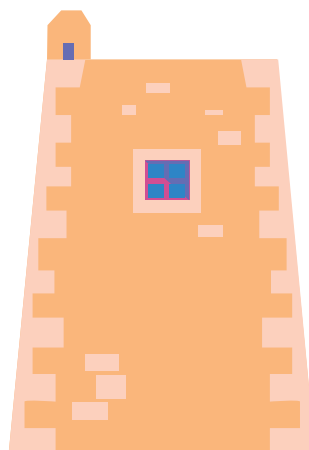


Among traditions and customs, the highlights are: the Sardine Festival, in the second weekend of August; the procession of Nossa Senhora da Orada, on the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> of August, in Albufeira; the Fisherman's Day, on the first weekend of September.

Another reason to visit this village is José Pargana, a renowned artist in the art of sculpting rocks stranded by the sea. Working in the old-fashioned way, holding a chisel in his hand, this sculptor shapes limestone rock into beautiful and varied forms, with the sea as a theme.

Another important and distinct site of the village is Torre da Medronheira. This is an ancient watchtower, part of the defensive line of the Algarve coast and particularly of the Albufeira stronghold; it aimed to warn and protect people from pirate and privateer attacks.

! Torre da Medronheira · Praia Olhos d'Água · Freshwater springs and tide pools · fishing activity on the eastern side of the beach .









## ARMAÇÃO DE PERA

Armação de Pera is a fishing village whose name came from the abundance of fish on its coasts, leading to the establishment of a tuna trap in the bay of Pera, 400 years ago. The traps were deployed during tuna migrations, from April to August; they attracted not only fishermen but also the Maghreb pirates. This prompted the construction of Santo António Fortress, still a prominent building in the current landscape of the village. Historians know that these communities didn't depend exclusively on tuna; in the 19th century and due to beach seine<sup>1</sup>, sardine even became the main economic resource of Armação de Pera. By the middle of the last century, as tuna changed its migration routes, the traps were mainly catching sardine and mackerel and eventually they disappeared; today, from all those who worked on the traps, there are only a few people left. Tuna routes were replaced by other activities, and today Armação de Pera is a major tourist centre in the municipality of

Silves, where fishing, the sea and fresh fish are parts of its brand.

In Armação de Pera, fishing operations start on the beach. Here, since immemorial times, boats were launched and stranded back again using nothing but "arms". Over time, wood beams (parais) were deployed seawards and greased regularly, allowing boats to slide more easily. Nowadays, tractors replaced human force and assist the strenuous work of beaching (varar)<sup>2</sup> fishing boats.

This task was firstly done by private companies, but now the fishermen's association has taken over. Women have always played an essential role in the fishing activity; their tasks ranged from helping in beaching operations, handling nets and fish drying, to the recent leadership of the fishermen's association.

In 2000, the village had registered 54 fishing boats and 73 seafarers. This was far above the current figures, with 15 boats and near 30 fishermen still working. This is the only fishing harbour of Silves municipality. There is one

Docapesca fish market, managed in partnership with the local fishermen's association. However, it only operates with cold storage, ice supply, first registration and weighing. The fish is then carried to the wholesale fish market in Portimão (or Quarteira) by the lorry of the fishermen's association.

As in many other harbours of the Algarve, octopus pots are an emerging fishery. Even so, trammel and gill nets, in particular those targeting the red mullet, have an important role. Besides octopus, most of the catches are soles, red mullet, cuttlefish, sea bass and gilt-head bream. Despite its small activity, in this bay there is also a seafood targeted fishery, from April to December, when special pots are used to catch swim crabs. Beach seine and lift nets have continuously decayed. The elders repeat something you hear everywhere: "*There was more fish back in the days than now*".

From the rich and varied typical dishes of Armação, the main one is caldeirada, a fish stew prepared with toadfish, torpedo ray, skate, conger eel and other fish. Tradition says the best part of a caldeirada is the noodles soup prepared using the remaining broth of the stew. Bread stew (ensopado) with cuttlefish (or squid), or grilled fish were always on the table of this fishing community. However, octopus and especially fried moray eel (with olive oil and garlic) are the favoured snacks of the people of Armação de Pera.

In this village, religious celebrations are related to fisheries: the feast of Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes (Our Lady of the Navigators), on the second Sunday of August, and the feast of Nossa Senhora dos Aflitos (Our Lady of the Distressed), on the third Sunday of September.

The fishermen's association is very active and highlights all the achievements made at Praia dos Pescadores: the storage facilities, the sheds for fishing gears, the tractor for beaching

operations and, of course, the co-management of the fish market and the transportation lorry. Direct sales to end-consumers and the "fish basket" are some of the possible future trends.

! **Fortress and Santo António Chapel · Caldas and Vasconcelos Palace · building of the former Casino · Rua dos Abraços (a street in the old village, commonly known as aldeia; or "the village") · traditional boats · Praia dos Pescadores (the fishermen's beach is the only private beach in Portugal) · sand dunes · limestone cliffs · its caves and stacks · Lagoa dos Salgados · Interpretation Route of Praia Grande (AT, Algarve Tourism) · scuba diving in the largest and richest coastal reef of the Algarve · underwater route "Poço" ("Underwater Routes of the Western Algarve").**



<sup>1</sup>A small-scale fishing gear using encircling nets; its consists of a long rope with floats with a conical-shaped net bag (xalavar) along half of its length; back in the days, fishing was done manually or helped by oxen; more recently, the task is performed by tractors..

<sup>2</sup>Run or haul up (a boat or ship) on to a beach.









## SENHORA DA ROCHA

A legend tells that the Virgin Mary often appeared on the top of a cliff hanging over the sea near Porches, Lagoa, helping and relieving all sailors in distress. A chapel was erected in her honour and later it was framed by a fortress to defend the sacred ground from the attacks of Moorish corsairs. Nossa Senhora da Rocha (Our Lady of the Rock) is an ancient settlement (probably dating back to the Romans) whose main livelihood had always been fishing. Sheltered by rocky headlands, defended by the fortress and inspired by the chapel, the beach of Nossa Senhora da Rocha has sheltered an important fishing community since ancient times. Nowadays, tourism overtook fishing and it represents the current major economic income of this population. However, fisheries and fish give it a distinctive aftertaste.

According to Dorilo Seruca's research in 2000, there were about 18 boats and 26 seafarers; these

figures contrast with the current 5 active boats and 8 fishermen, plus 3 tourism boats. The boats are beached from the strand using a winch; the fish is sold in Portimão (18 km away).

Fishing is mainly based on octopus pots. However, drifting long lines using live bait (mostly crab) successfully catch highly desired species such as sea bass, gilt-head bream, croakers and sea breams. The famous penacho (pink dentex) is caught by line at dawn, using hooks baited with live squid. This cephalopod is not just appreciated by the pink dentex: the squid fishery makes part of this community's customs, mainly using the toneira<sup>3</sup>.

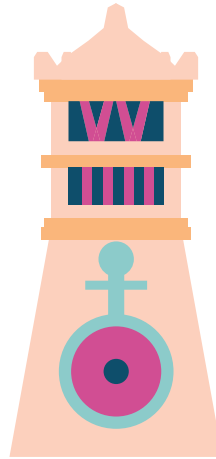
In gastronomy, preferences go to grilled fish, conger eel and octopus rice, octopus salad, dried octopus and fried moray eel.

Religious celebrations are an ancient custom. Nossa Senhora da Rocha procession takes place every year on the first Sunday of August. Also in this month, the Octopus Festival thrills both

locals and outsiders.

The fishing community of Senhora da Rocha is united by the recent fishermen's association. They are pleased to have a ramp, storage room for gear and cold storage facilities. However, they long for a transport to take their catch to Portimão, or right next door, to Armação de Pera - if the wholesale fish market would reopen for business.

! Fortress · Chapel · Algarve style chimneys of Porches · limestone cliffs · caves · stacks and arches · Praia da Senhora da Rocha · tunnel connecting it to Praia Nova beach · Praia da Cova Redonda · Praia do Barranco · Praia das Fontainhas · Praia da Albandeira · water sports.



<sup>3</sup>Squid fishing gear, consisting of a small piece of lead with a crown of hooks on one end.



## BENAGIL

Benagil is a beach in the municipality of Lagoa which holds registers of fishing activity at least since the 19th century. According to some historians, its name may derive from the Arabic word Ben together with the Christian name Gil, meaning "son of Gil". Little is known about the history and the evolution of its fisheries; yet, the fact remains that this activity still thrives here and it serves as a magnet for tourism which discovered in Benagil one of the Algarve's gems. Actually, Algar de Benagil, one the most famous caves in the world, is very close to this beach. From the strand, it is possible to contemplate all the charm of the limestone cliffs, with its tracery of caves, arches and stacks, with appealing names: Gruta do Coração (Cave of the Heart), Gruta dos Dois Olhos (Cave of the Two Eyes), or Gruta do Paraíso (Cave of Heaven), the arches at Praia da Marinha or the underwater stack.

In 2000, there were about 13 registered boats

and 21 seafarers. Today, there are 14 active boats; however, only 7 are fishing boats while the remaining are tourism boats. The same applies to seafarers, which are more than two dozen, but split between the two activities.

Concerning fisheries, long lines are the most used fishing gears. Mainly baited with squid, it catches species of high commercial value such as breams, including pink dentex (locally called penachos), gilt-head bream, croaker, sea bass (in decline, nowadays) and sea breams.

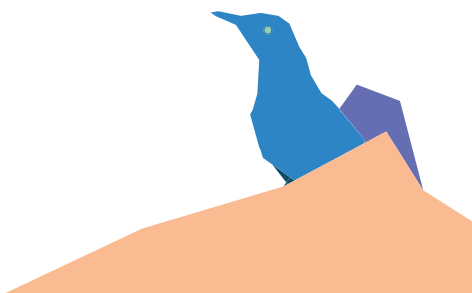
Typical dishes of this fishing community are fish stews (caldeirada) and the respective bread porridge prepared with the broth, conger eel rice, fried moray eel (scarce, nowadays) and fried conger eel liver with eggs.

In August, they organise religious feasts such as Nossa Senhora da Rocha and Senhora dos Navegantes.

The Benagil fishermen have join efforts with

maritime tourism activities (APOTUGIL) and now they count on with cold storage facilities at the beach, provided by the municipality of Lagoa. Yet, they have to sell their fish in the wholesale market in Portimão, about 16 km away. The possibility of direct sales, particularly during weekends, and the use of the old fish market of Armação de Pera (at least in summer) are some of the aspirations of this fishing community.

! Algar de Benagil (Sinkhole) · caves · arches and stacks · Praia de Benagil · Praia do Carvalho · Praia da Corredoura · Praia da Marinha · Praia de Vale Centeanes · water sports · snorkeling in "Praia da Marinha" ("Underwater Routes of the Western Algarve") · Pedestrian nature trail "7 Vales Suspensos" or Seven Hanging Valleys (AT, Algarve Tourism).






## CARVOEIRO

Carvoeiro is a landmark in the municipality of Lagoa, which holds some of the most touristic beaches of the Western Algarve. It has been a fishing village since ancient times and it owes its name to Caboiere — a word with Arab-medieval origins. Near Alfanzina, Cabo Carvoeiro is mentioned in the most ancient geographic maps of Portugal. Tuna and sardine traps thrived here since the days back to Prince Henry; in the first half of the 20th century they were followed by canning factories. Since then, tourism, a more profitable and less harsh activity, replaced the declining fisheries.

Fishermen quickly adapted to these new conditions. Especially in summer, many began providing boat trips to tourists, taking them to the nearby sea caves of Carvoeiro. In 2000, there were only two registered boats and an equal number of fishermen. By then, this was the smallest fishing community of south Portugal.

Currently, the few boats remaining in Carvoeiro are exclusively operating within nautical tourism. Yet, fisheries still take place in the neighbouring villages of Benagil and Ferragudo.

A cuisine inspired by fishing products still persists in dishes like fish soup, fish stew (caldeirada), beans with whelks, corn porridge (xarém) and skinned horse mackerel.

 **Fortress of Nossa Senhora da Encarnação** · **Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Encarnação** · **Alfanzina lighthouse** · **Sítio do Algar Seco** · **Praia de Carvoeiro.**





## FERRAGUDO

Ferragudo, a coastal village in the municipality of Lagoa, beats the drum for its Prehistory, while Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans also disputed its coast. Nevertheless, the village as we know it today only emerged in the 14th century. With a privileged location, Ferragudo (as well as Portimão) has always been the guardian of the Arade estuary and an authority in its surrounding waters. The origin of the name Ferragudo is uncertain. Some historians say it may have origins in an ancient iron pulley that once existed at Praia da Angrinha; this mechanism would have been used to raise fish and other goods from the docked ships.

Canning industries played a key role in the apogee of this village, even reaching an enviable position in the national fisheries market. As this industry declined due to maladaptation to new demands and to lack of innovation, Ferragudo

was once again heavily dependent on fisheries. Then tourism arrived, creating opportunities and developing new services; so, the village just took this chance and now tourism represents its main economic activity.

There are about 17 active boats in Ferragudo and about 25 fishermen. Within the context of the Western Algarve, this is an example of preservation of a fishing community, at least in regard to the most recent years (2000). Furthermore, maritime tourism activities are taking sound steps towards sustainable development.

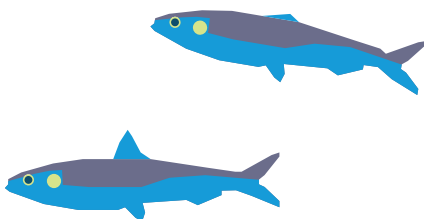
Pots are the most popular fishing gear; octopus is abundant and highly profitable, providing a quality catch, especially comparing with other species. Gill and trammel nets are also used on a regular basis in this region, aiming the capture of soles, sea bream, gilt-head bream, sea bass and red mullet. Squid is also caught using toneiras.

When speaking about Ferragudo gastronomy,

old fishermen say that "all the food from the sea is good food". Actually, this saying applies to fish stew (caldeirada), grilled sardines, fish cataplana<sup>4</sup>, octopus rice, beans with octopus (or whelks) and octopus eggs.

Regarding ancient customs, the main celebration is the procession in honour of Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of Conception), on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. Fishing boats are decked and then launched to pay homage and to attract good omens. In modern days, Ferragudo's fishing community also celebrates the Fisherman's Day. It offers a lively programme, enhancing conviviality among the sea people; it takes place every year on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May.

! Ferragudo seafront · Ponta do Altar · Fortress of São João do Arade or Ferragudo Castle · Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição · Peer · Praia da Angrinha · Praia Grande · Praia do Pintadinho · Praia dos Caneiros · wildlife watching - birds and sea mammals ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve") · sport fishing · boat trips on the Arade River · water sports.



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<sup>4</sup> *Cataplana* is a deep copper pan with a sealable lid (T/N).











## ALVOR

The origin of the settlements on Ria de Alvor bank is lost in time, dating back to the cradle of mankind. Since the Stone Age (Palaeolithic) mankind chose this place for shelter and sustenance. There are traces of the Neolithic, the Metal Ages and other people who wrote here part of their history: Lusitanians, Carthaginians, Phoenicians, Ligurians, Celts, Romans, Goths and Arabs.

However, there are strong evidences showing that the founder of Alvor was the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, in 436 b.C., giving his name to it: Portus Hannibalis. The current name of Alvor comes from the Arabic *albur* (heath, wasteland), dating back to the Muslim conquest in 716 d.C. This village in the municipality of Portimão has fishing traditions deeply marked in its matrix.

Sixteen years ago, there were about 54 boats with 91 registered seafarers in Alvor; this counteracts

with the current figures: 27 boats and approximately 63 active fishermen. Nowadays, and after the closing of the fish market, the first fish sale takes place in Portimão.

Within the Algarve context, and as a result of the proximity to its Ria, Alvor still maintains a strong fishing activity with long line, using natural, easily accessible and cheap baits; yet they require a significant amount of work. Here, women have a prominent role as they participate in the assembling of fishing gears, which in local slang is "*safar o aparelho*" meaning clear the gear. In the present, baits are mainly cheap frozen cephalopods (squid and shortfin squid) which ease logistics in baiting operations while providing an effective catch. Some of the top catches with this gear are: axillary seabream, common two-banded seabream (or *safia*), pandora and gilt-head bream.

Fish traps, namely octopus pots, are also significant in this harbour. Baited with mackerel and often with a lure of aluminium foil, pots are masters in the art of deceiving octopuses, for the joyfulness of Portuguese gastronomy lovers.

The three docked seiners are a reminder that this fishing technique still has a key role in Alvor. They maintain the tradition of supplying sardines, mackerel and horse mackerel to locals, to Portuguese people from other regions and to holiday makers from all over the world.

According with this fishing community tradition, gastronomic suggestions are invariably prepared with natural and fresh ingredients from Ria de Alvor, such as cockles and razor clams. Some examples of its dishes are: cockles with olive oil and garlic; fish stew (caldeirada) and broth porridge with cockles; razor clams rice/pasta/bread porridge.

The Alvor curses, customs and sayings of Alvor, are famous in Portugal and they owe a lot to the wisdom of its people. Nicknames are also an ancient practice and those fishermen who do not have one are rare. The main celebration happens in the first week of August when a boat procession carries the image of Our Lady.

Local fishermen and their association (the fishermen's association of Alvor) form a cohesive group. Their most recent achievements are the acquisition of a cold storage room, a lorry and a crane which support and ease the fishermen's life.

The community faces problems related with the fishing itself and with silting of the navigation channel and bar. This recurrent issue, worsened by the high numbers of shellfish farms, burdens the regular fishing activity.

! **Ria de Alvor · sand dunes · Praia dos Três Irmãos · Praia do Submarino · Praia de Alvor · nature trail "Ao Sabor da Maré" (AT, Algarve Tourism) · water sports · scuba diving at "Ocean Revival Underwater Park" ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve").**









## PRAIA DA LUZ


Located in the municipality of Lagos, in the village with the same name, Praia da Luz (formerly known as Senhora da Luz) is a flagship beach of the Western Algarve. Since the Roman period, the village evolved in fisheries. It stood out during the Prince Henry period of the Portuguese Discoveries (15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries), with its tuna and sardine traps and whaling, and even canneries, in the late 19th century.

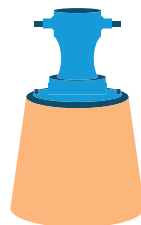
Even so, times have changed. By the end of the last century, some boats were still beached on Praia da Luz. Then, the fish market was closed and most of the fishermen left, searching for better opportunities in Lagos. Some began to work in maritime tourism activities, including big game fishing, targeting species such as swordfish, marlin and blue shark.

The pretty and picturesque fishing village won the tourism bet which brought — and still brings — wealth and growth. On the beach, the

ramp and the old winch are the remaining silent witnesses of the memory of those hard fishing times in Luz.

Gastronomy is marked by the fishing community and includes skinned horse mackerel, fried calamari and octopus rice.

 **Nossa Senhora da Luz Church · seafront of Praia da Luz · Roman Archeological Centre at Praia da Luz · black volcanic rock · Praia de Porto de Mós · Praia D. Ana · Ponta da Piedade · water sports · scuba diving at Vapor da Luz "Vilhelm Krag" ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve").**









## BURGAU

Burgau is a fishing village in Budens, municipality of Vila do Bispo. It owes its name to the abundance of whelks (a gastropod mollusc, locally known as burgau or burri ) on its shores. Mankind has always had a continuous presence in this land, from the Stone Age to the Romans. The later had a strong link to fisheries and to garum<sup>5</sup> industry, as witnessed by the remains of salting fish tanks. The imposing fortress of Almadena (the Arabic word for minaret) is a testimony of the Arab presence. In the 17th century there was a tuna trap (almadrava) and, in the 19th century, Baldaque da Silva acknowledged the existence of a beach seine and a sardine trap (acedares) in front of the ridge known as Ponta da Cama da Vaca; these were evidences of the importance of this fishing village. Presently, the tourism industry sets the pace in the village, which has a large number of its fishermen working in Lagos. Still, Burgau retains the wisdom and the memories of its

fishing people.

Currently, there are 9 boats (3 coastal boats, operating from Lagos, and 6 local) and 30 active fishermen; this is slightly less than the 16 boats (6 coastal, 10 local) and 41 seafarers registered in 2000.

The favoured fishing gears are gill nets (nets with only one wall), pots and clay pots (alcatruz); the main catches are red mullet, axillary seabream, soles, octopus.


When it's meal time, the preferences of the community are fish stews (caldeirada), grilled fish (including sea mullets), burgau omelettes and stuffed squid.

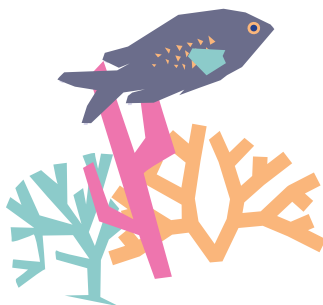
The processions of Nossa Senhora do Perp tuo Socorro (Our Lady of Eternal Succour) endure through time and take place every year by late summer (September). In contrast, fishermen's popular festivals (lasting 2-3 days and including traditional games, such as reaching the top of a greasy boat mast), only persist in the memory



of the elders, who still remember the time of underwater harvesting of seaweed.

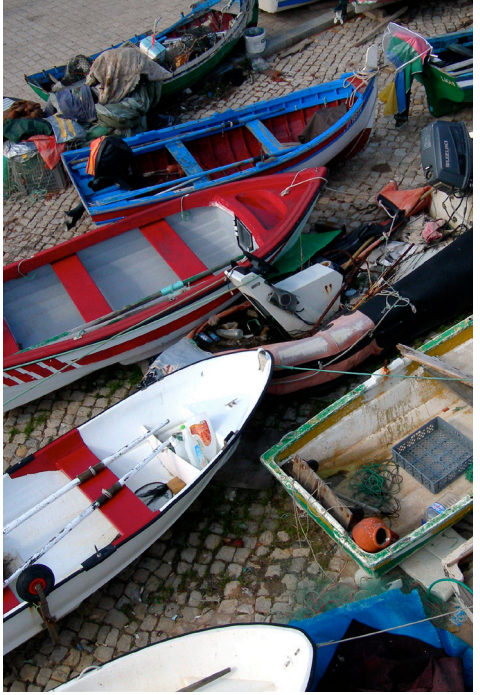
Despite the demand towards Lagos, in search of better conditions, the fishermen of Burgau can count on a ramp, a winch, occasional transport of the catch by the municipality van and a new warehouse, which soon will be provided by the municipality of Vila do Bispo.

 **Fortress (or Bateria) of Burgau · Fortress of Almádena · Praia da Boca do Rio · scuba diving on the Burgau barge ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve").**



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<sup>5</sup>Garum was a sort of condiment, widely used in ancient Rome. It was prepared with blood, viscera and other selected parts of mackerel or tuna, mixed with other small fish and crushed crustaceans and molluscs; this mixture was left in a brine under the sun for about two months — or it was artificially heated.







## SALEMA


Worldly known as one of the 15 most quiet and low profile beaches, Praia da Salema, in the municipality of Vila do Bispo, showcases a story of success between fishing activity and tourism. As its neighbour Burgau, Salema has a very rich and ancient history. The remains of an ancient Roman villa and a fish cannery confirm this long fishing tradition. It is known that it held tuna traps (some belonged to Prince Henry) replaced afterwards with sardine traps likewise the trend followed by other places of the Western Algarve. Tuna traps were assembled in April-May; in addition to tuna, they mainly caught breams, croaker and bluefish.

Currently, it has 9 boats and about 12 fishermen - in contrast with 19 vessels and 25 registered seafarers, in 2000.

The main fishing gears are pots and clay pots (alcatruzes) for octopus; gill and trammel nets for axillary seabream, sole, red mullet and cuttlefish.

In gastronomy, the highlights are the conger eel and skate stew, grilled fish, whelks with beans, mussels with beans, skinned horse mackerel and dry octopus.

Local celebrations catch everyone's attention; the Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes procession, on the 15<sup>th</sup> August, is a must-go event.

 **Menhirs (Milrei, Padrão and Aspradantas)** · **Biodiversity Station (BE) at Praia da Boca do Rio** · **fossilized footprints (herbivorous dinosaurs, genus Iguanodon on the western strand)** · **Praia da Salema** · **nature trails "Pelos encostas da Raposeira"** · **underwater route Ingrina-Rampa Baixa (ICNF/PNSACV)** · **water sports.**





## SAGRÉS

Sagres is a village in the municipality of Vila do Bispo. It is a symbol of Portugal in the world as it inspired Prince Henry — and he used it as a spearhead — to begin the Portuguese Discoveries maritime odyssey in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In ancient times, Sagres was known as *Promontorium Sacrum*, a mythical place where the known world ended. Spirituality always left a mark on this land, as various religious rituals took place here. The more ancient ones were probably dedicated to Saturn, Heracles and Cronus; later, they summoned the Christian martyr, Saint Vicent.

Fishing traditions are also ancient. Likewise the rest of the Western Algarve, several tuna traps operated here; they were defended against Moorish pirates attacks by the fortresses of Baleeira and Beliche. Another important activity in this region was whaling. Sagres is part of the Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina (Southwestern Alentejo and the Vicentina Coast) since the 80's of the last

century. Due to its unique natural values, it holds the only marine protected area of the south coast of the Algarve. This natural reserve includes the islets of Martinhal and the large sea stacks of Gigante and Gaivota.

Nowadays, in Sagres harbour (Baleeira) there are 65 registered vessels, representing 104 fishermen. Local Docapesca is one of the most eagerly sought wholesale fish markets due to the outstanding quality of its fish.

The main gears used are: trammel nets (cuttlefish and several sole species), bottom-set gill nets (axillary seabream, red mullet and common two-banded seabream), seine nets (pelagic species as sardines, horse-mackerel and mackerel) and long lines (breams, conger eel, stakes and forkbeard).

Some particular species require some special fishing gear. This is the case of monkfish: it is caught with gill nets (with only one wall) with meshes larger than 100mm and deployed between 100–240m deep. For lobsters, fishermen use pots and nets; after being caught and until

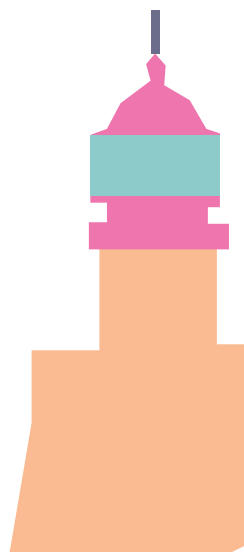
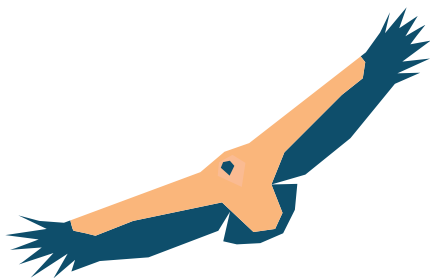
the fish market auction, they are kept alive in running water. Sagres is a top selling wholesale fish market for lobster; notwithstanding, local fishermen voluntarily observe a closed season during the months of October to December. The large landed breams are captured by long lines baited with live crab (pilado), or sardines if this bait is unavailable.

Within the fishing community, typical Sagres dishes are stuffed squids (prepared all over the year until Christmas), grilled bream, caldeirada (with common two-banded seabream, bream, skate and torpedo ray, dogfish, sardines), limpets stew and lobster rice. On the table, some snacks are mandatory: fried moray eel, whelk salad and, of course, from the Vincentina Coast, the famous barnacles, which are served while warm.

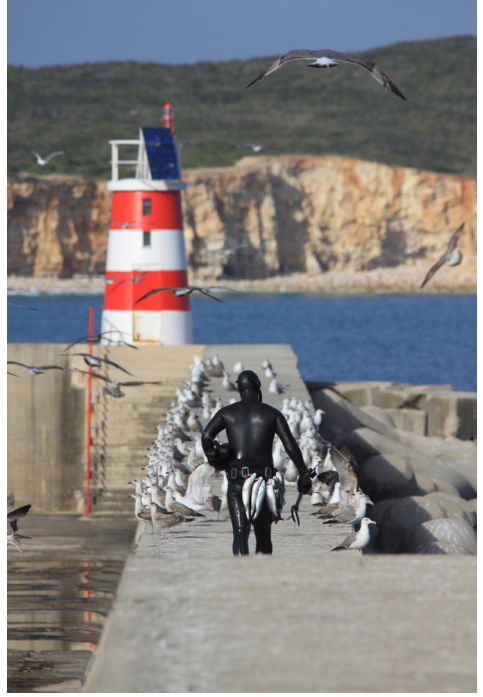
Fishermen are known as men of faith. Processions in honour of our Nossa Senhora da Graça (Our Lady of Grace) begin on land and extend into the sea; the blessed vessels return to the harbour of refuge, on the 15th of August. Celebrations are also part of local costumes. On the last Sunday of May, it takes place the Fishermen's Day, promoting conviviality within the community.

Sagres fishing community is united and it is represented by its association. The group promotes fish processing innovative projects, aiming to increase the value of their products. Some of these projects are the wrapping of landed sardines in small chilled Styrofoam boxes, ready to be sold. In the future, they aim to improve the operational logistics on the fishing harbour and to certify the fishing products of Sagres. Some chefs even say, and not by casualty, that this is the best fish in the world.

! Sagres Fortress · Beliche Fortress · Baleeira Fortress · Cape São Vicente and Lighthouse · Porto da Baleeira · Praia da Mareta · Praia do Martinhal · Praia do Castelejo · Praia do Telheiro · Torre D'Aspa · Praia da Murração · Ponta Ruiva · scuba diving in the caves or Martinhal islets ("Underwater Routes of the Western Algarve") · megalithic structures on Monte dos Amantes · surf and bodyboarding ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve") · wildlidge watching - birds and marine mammals ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve") · sport fishing.











## CARRAPATEIRA

The history of this fishing village (in the municipality of Aljezur) dates back to ancient human settlements linked to the sea and to fisheries. From Palaeolithic findings and until the Romans, many people dropped anchor in its stream; some of them settled here while travelling along the Roman via. The Muslim presence might have been the strongest one, as confirmed by the ruins of a seasonal settlement of Muslim fishermen (12<sup>th</sup> century), found on a cliff top near the small fishing harbour of Sítio do Forno.


Due to the rough coastline, fishing activity is seasonal and, until quite recently, it had two main centres: Zimbreirinha and Sítio do Forno; the latter was freshly renewed.

Carrapateira is inserted in the Natural Park of Southwestern Alentejo and the Vicentina Coast. It is famous for the migration of sea bre-

ams, locally known as "*arribação*", recreational fishing, tourism (nature, sun and beach) and above all for surfing, which ex-libris is Praia do Amado.

The fishing community is now reduced to 6 boats and 10 fishermen, slightly less than the 12 boats and 19 fishermen registered in 2000.

Fishing gears used here are pots for octopus and long lines for sea bass and sea bream. Regarding gastronomy, sea bream is king – grilled, roasted, or even as rissoles. For a good meal, barnacles and fried moray eel cannot be left out of the table.

 **Carrapateira Fortress, Church and Museum · fossil cliffs · Pontal da Carrapateira · Ribeira da Bordeira · Praia do Amado · Praia da Bordeira · nature trail "Trilho das Marés" (AT) · Underwater route Carrapateira - Porto dos Fornos (ICNF/PNSACV) · fishing sport · scuba diving · surf and bodyboarding ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve")**





## ARRIFANA

In the extreme northwest of the Algarve coast, between Carrapateira and Odeceixe, we can find Arrifana, a safe port, sheltered from the north winds. There are traces of human presence in this area since the time of Epipaleolithic communities of fishermen and gatherers (9–8 millennia b.C.). On the other hand, the mythical Muslim military monastery, the Arrifana Ribat (Al-Rihana), was located here.

Later, in the Christian period, the fortress of Arrifana (17<sup>th</sup> century) was built to protect the coast and the tuna trap (assembled during summer months); its ruins still remain and from this viewpoint it is possible to admire the coast in all its splendour. The protection provided by cannons had managed to discourage Moorish pirates. They sought not just for food, water supplies and the loot of treasures or religious artefacts, but they also aimed to capture people and boats. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a ramp was built,

being followed by the small fishing harbour in order to better accommodate the village's fishing community.

Arrifana is also a landmark for surf and one of the first surfing beaches in Portugal. Here, ocean waves are known for their perfection when together with moderate seaward winds they reach one to four meters high.

The village is located inside the Natural Park of Southwestern Alentejo and the Vicentina Coast. It holds one of the few marine protected areas of the Algarve, including the sharp and stark Pedra da Agulha (southward of the bay), Pedra da Carraça and the coastal area between the fortress of Arrifana and Ponta da Atalaia. Forests of kelp (leafy brown algae locally known as golfes) distinguish the sea bed of this protected area; clinging to reefs, they provide shelter to a large number of marine species.

At Portinho da Arrifana, 18 boats operate with a *companha*<sup>6</sup> of 25 active fishermen. This still



represents a very strong community when comparing with the 2000 figures: about 23 boats and 40 registered fishermen, not necessarily all active.


The main fishing gears are: gill nets for sea bream, sea bass and sole; trammel nets for soles, skate and turbot; pots for octopus. Long lines are not so often used. Yet they are highly efficient while capturing sea bream and sea bass, which are landed still alive and kicking. The final highlight is the extremely sought and disputed barnacle harvest.

Typical dishes of the fishing community are: steamed octopus in olive oil, fish stew (caldeirada), fried moray eel, the famous barnacles, octopus with sweet potato (from Rogil or from the floodplains of Aljezur).

On the last Saturday of July, the Fisherman's Festival takes place, observing the traditional seawards procession and grilled sardines on

land. Nowadays, a new tradition joins the old one. Already famous, the Arrifana Sunset Festival takes place at the small harbour, one day after the fishermen's day.

The fishermen's association of "Portinho da Arrifana and the Vicentina Coast" manages the points of sale, providing help with weighing, storage, cold preservation and fish transportation to Sagres market. The more pressing needs of this community are the ramp and pier improvement.

 **Arrifana Fortress · Aljezur Castle · Aljezur Museum · Igreja Nova · Arrifana cliffs (Ponta da Atalaia) · Praia de Monte Clérigo · Praia da Amoreira · Praia de Vale dos Homens · Praia de Pipa · Praia da Carriagem · Praia de Odeceixe · donkey and horse riding · surf and bodyboarding ("Coastal Itineraries of the Western Algarve").**



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<sup>6</sup>Boat or vessel crew. Fishermen's guild. The same as *companhia* ("company"). Seafarers.









## FINAL REMARKS

The coastal villages of the Algarve have their roots deep inside Prehistory, when the first communities of fishermen and gatherers settled on this coast and explored the wealth of its estuaries and lagoons.

The Celts lived here and left an important inheritance, as they held a primordial alphabet and were, in return, influenced by local Mediterranean civilizations. Here, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and especially the Romans developed the most diverse economic and cultural activities, always with a maritime and fishing character, namely the salted fish and fish processing industries, such as the famous *garum*.

The following Muslim period was also important to coastal populations, especially due to innovations in seamanship, such as the introduction and use of the compass, and the remarkable commercial and intellectual momentum of ancient Xelb (current town of Silves).

Whaling was one of the most important and profitable fishing activities of the Christian period, with Lagos and Senhora da Luz in the lead. In Sagres and the coast of Lagos, red coral fishing was also being practiced since the time of the Moors, lasting until the Portuguese Discoveries period. Then, fisheries were renewed and its importance increased with tuna and sardine traps; the generated wealth was a lure for the greed of Moorish piracy. Therefore, a network of defensive watchtowers, fortresses and strongholds were built in the main coastal villages.

In the late 19th century, with the arrival of new preservation techniques and steam machines, sardine fishing using seine nets and canneries provided wealth to coastal communities of the Algarve.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mass tourism arrived, looking for a piece of this Eden by the sea. With a distinctive quality seal given by fisheries and gastronomy, this escalating and striking new economic activity brought an essential new lease of life to coastal communities.

Apart from the coastal towns with strong fishing traditions of the western Algarve (Albufeira, Portimão and Lagos), there are 13 coastal villages with fishing vocation: Olhos de Água, Armação de Pera, Senhora da Rocha, Benagil, Carvoeiro, Ferragudo, Alvor, Praia da Luz, Burgau, Salema, Sagres, Carrapateira and Arrifana. However, in Carvoeiro and Praia da Luz, fishing activity is merely occasional. However, even in decline, fisheries still beat the drum, maintaining lively and proud fishing communities in the remaining 11 villages.

In these villages there are currently more than 300 active fishermen and around 180 vessels, mostly costal boats. Sagres outstands as the most important harbour, whether regarding its figures (vessels and more than 100 fishermen) or regarding the wholesale fish market; Alvor also has remarkable figures (> 50 fishermen), being followed by the smaller Arrifana, Ferragudo and Armação de Pera (> 25 fishermen); the remaining villages barely count 20 fishermen.

Pots are the main gear and they particularly stimulate fishermen due to the abundance and the high prices reached by octopus in the fish market. Gill nets and trammel nets are also widely used, catching soles, skate, red mullet, axillary seabream, pandora, gilt-head bream, sea bass, cuttlefish, monkfish and lobsters. The use of long lines is declining due to the required amount of labour and time; today people prefer to spend more time with their families and to engage in businesses of a different nature. Still, long lines are an important gear in Alvor, Benagil and even in the Vicentina Coast. Using squid or live baits (squids or crabs), longlines catch some of the freshest and highest commercially valuable fish: large breams, gilt-head bream, croaker, sea bass and sea bream. Seine nets still remain, but they depend on sardine (now in decline), mackerel and horse mackerel catches. Regarding coastal fisheries, this gear is the one operating with the largest vessels and employing the most numerous crews. There are some specialised fisheries targeting squid (using squid





jigs and lights) and, at specific depths, monkfish and lobster (gill nets with proper mesh sizes).

Concerning gastronomy, some dishes are quite common in most of the coastal villages of the Western Algarve: caldeirada, grilled fish, fried moray eel, xarém with cockles or prepared with the fish stew broth, conger eel or octopus rice, beans with whelks and skinned horse mackerel. Other highlighted dishes of this rich cuisine are: stuffed squids, burgau omelettes, limpets stew, steamed octopus in olive oil, and last but not least, the Vincentian Coast barnacles.

Most of the celebrations have a religious character, as the fishermen of the Algarve are faithful Christians. They maintain the traditional processions in honour of Our Lady, carrying her image seawards on their decked boats and returning to land, empowered by this Marian cult. However, if some traditions need to be fulfilled, others are reinvented. Nowadays, the fisherman's day is celebrated and, following modern demands, sardine, barnacle and even

octopus festivals are taking place.

Many people talk about the problem of individualism in fisheries. Despite of that, in the western Algarve, associations are booming, providing local fishermen with a feeling of protection. Excluding the closure or sales restrictions imposed on the former Docapesca fish markets, they have better working conditions today than in the past: all fishing harbours provide some sort of equipment to help the landing of fish (whether it is done by ramp, by a winch or by dock) and cold or fishing gear storage facilities. They still hope for a higher recognition of this profession with the achievement of better first auction prices for their catches. Some solutions (certification, direct sales, quality and fish processing improvements, more efficient management of fish stocks) are already ongoing. Their aim is to ensure a better future for fisheries, in environmental, economic and social terms.

*Cheers!*





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