

TOP

7

Grand circular walk at the Cabo de São Vicente

4.15 hrs.



On the Algarve's most impressive cape

The very popular Cabo de São Vicente is the most impressive and most renowned cape on the Algarve. At this spot, two of the best known long distance trails in Portugal come together. Not far away, the *Fortaleza de Sagres*, the fortress of Prince Henry the Navigator, is most certainly on the bucket list of many a visitor. Also worthwhile is the almost completely untouched coastline and the rustic hinterland off the beaten tourist track.

Starting point: The car park in front of the lighthouse on the Cabo de São Vicente, 72m.

Approach: Drive from Vila do Bispo along the N 268 towards Cabo de São Vicente, 15km. Public transport: numerous connections daily from Lagos to Cabo de São Vicente.

Grade: Narrow, stony paths, a tarmac road and broad dirt roads.

Waymarking: The route is shared with stretches of a number of long distance trails. The first stretch is a part of the long distance trail *Via Algarviana* as well as of the *Rota Vicentina* and is waymarked *white/red*; the section along the beach at Telheiro is a leg of the *Fishermen's Trail*

and is waymarked *green/blue*.

Height difference: 140m.

Refreshment: A café as well as food stands at the Cabo de São Vicente.

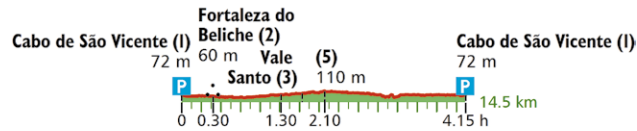
Note: Because of the narrow path that cuts through the *macchia*, we recommend wearing long trousers for this walk.

Tip: The fortress on the cape of Saint Vincent is worth seeing. This fortress was constructed in the 16th century on the site, it is said, where a cloister from the Middle Ages once stood. Legend has it that the earthly remains of Saint Vincent were kept here. In the interior of the fortress, you will find a lighthouse, built in 1904, and which is still in operation.

Fortaleza do Beliche.



From the **lighthouse (1)** on the **Cabo de São Vicente** head back for a short stretch along the approach road. About 500m on, a gravel road (*white/red*) turns off to the left. This trail leads parallel to the road, running through a terrain of seaside *macchia*. As we walk, we can enjoy a backwards view of the lighthouse as well as of the steep coastal cliffs and the islands lying offshore. The trail hooks to the right and continues by heading back to the approach road. Turn left along the road towards Sagres. In the distance, you can already spot the peninsula where the *Fortaleza de Sagres* is located and, close at hand, visit the ruins of the **Fortaleza do Beliche (2)**, lying to the right of road at the steep coastal cliffs. In the past, parts of the fortress have tumbled into the sea due to the wearing away of the cliffs. Past the *Fortaleza*, the trail leads over a little hillock. After about 1.3km along the approach road to the cape, the trail forks off to the left. Now follow a narrow tarmac path that



ascends slightly, traversing a kind of high plain, lying in the coastal hinterland. Along this somewhat monotonous path, continue on to reach a little hamlet, seemingly abandoned, **Vale Santo (3)**. Here, meet up with a trail junction. Take the waymarked trail to the right along a broad dirt road. At the crest, this begins a slight ascent. After passing a small pine forest, lying to your left, meet up with a **trail junction (4)**. Here, once again follow the also *white/red* waymarked *Rota Vicentina* via a narrow dirt path by turning left and entering a mostly uninhabited area. Solitary houses appear, otherwise, the landscape is characterized by fields and meadows. Just past the first white house, the path forks off to the left and passes impressive stands of agave. A little later on, fork off to the right and follow a narrow dirt path that soon becomes a sandy, stony trail, ascending slightly. Soon meet up with yet another **trail junction (5)**. To the right, the trail leads along the *Rota Vicentina* towards Vila do Bispo. We, however, continue to the left, now following the *green/blue* waymarkers of the *Fishermen's Trail*, leading along the coastline towards the **Cabo de São Vicente**; the lighthouse there can already be spotted in the distance. A short stretch past the junction, you could turn right to descend to the Praia da Ponta Ruiva. Our route, however, leads along the

The steep coastline at Cabo de São Vicente.



Whilst walking in the Algarve, the walker often meets up with towering agaves.

broad dirt path running parallel to the coastline. At prominent places, there are access roads leading to viewpoints. During this leg of the walk, mighty cliffs protrude finger-like into the sea (Ponta Ruiva, Cachado, Ninho da Cegonha, Laredo das Corchas). Especially striking is the cape of Telheiro, that juts out from the large bay of Telheiro towards the northwest. Before reaching the **Praia do Telheiro** the trail leads somewhat into the interior in order to cross over the deep valley notch by skirting around this in a long bend. Here, the trail becomes rockier and somewhat more difficult. To descend, you must use a ladder, for the ascent to the other side, you have to cross over a somewhat precipitous terrain. Afterwards, cross over a car park (the access to the Praia do Telheiro), then continue a descent again over a narrow path whilst traversing another river valley. Subsequently, climb up to the high plain located in front of the **Cabo de São Vicente**. The landscape is swathed with rock rose and juniper bushes. Around the Ponta dos Arquizes, the steep coastal cliffs, pounded by a constant barrage of rolling waves, is not less spectacular. Continue the walk, steadily following the narrow path, heading towards the lighthouse. During this stretch, the orientation for the continued course is provided by the *green/blue* waymarkers and by cairns that have been sometimes constructed for additional help along the way. Soon, reach the merging point with the *white/red* waymarkers of the *Rota Vicentina* (or of the *Via Algarviana*) and then pick up the final leg that follows the approach route to return to the **lighthouse (1)**.