

FGS Field Trip to Portugal, September/October 2002

The geo/astronomical trip to the Algarve, led by John & Lyn Linse, was three identical, back-to-back weeks at the end of September/beginning of October 2002. Accommodation was in private apartments attached to the Astronomical Centre (COAA)

Day	Itinerary
Day 1	Flight from UK to Faro; minibus to COAA
A	am - to Lagos: lacustrine geology, birdwatching & botany. pm - tour of town, visit to museum. evening - dinner at COAA, observe night sky
B	am - to Luz: cliffside sedimentary structures pm - to Sagres & St. Vincent Point Fort evening - dinner at COAA, observe night sky
C	am/pm - to Monchique: volcanics, granite quarry (if can be arranged) & cork forest.
D	am/pm - to Lagoa: red sandstone cliffs at Carvoeiro, the Algo Seco (dry gulley). Birds & plants along the way.
E	am - to Portomaio: sightseeing pm - visit to an archaeological site evening - dinner at COAA, observe night sky
F	am/pm - to Silves: geology and castle visit
Day 8	Travel to Faro for return flight to UK

The autumn field trip to the Western Algarve was a new type of venture for the Society. Lyn and John Linse organised and led three groups of FGS members on a study tour over a period of three weeks. Each group numbering, four to six people, spent one week with us at an astronomical observatory, Centro de Observacao Astronomica no Algarve (COAA), sited in the hills near Portimao,. The area is not heavily frequented by tourists so there were opportunities to sample real Portuguese life.

Logistics worked like clockwork. Lyn and John flew in with the first group on 21st September and left with the third group on 10th October. Flights were back-to-back and the changeovers were spot on. An air-conditioned minibus with a driver was hired for the full three weeks. Mark White, the driver, was excellent, both friendly and reliable. He spoke both English and Portuguese.

It was three weeks of fun and adventure except for one disaster. Unfortunately, on the second day of week 2, David Caddy fell and broke his hip. Ten minutes later he was rushed to hospital by ambulance and three hours later had a hip replacement operation. By the end of the week he was able to fly home with the rest of his group.

Most of the days were spent doing geology at a leisurely pace. The minibus was always within a short walking distance of the sites studied. Great scenery and rocks, especially on the coast. Also on the agenda was bird watching (Ornithology) and a half-day was spent at a bird sanctuary. The groups saw how birds were caught in nets, weighed, inspected and ringed. After that we went spotting at the Alvor Estuary and saw groups of Flamingos, probably on their way to Africa.

There were plenty of sites of archaeological interest and museums to visit. During clear evenings the groups had an opportunity to view the heavens in all their splendour through the powerful telescopes at COAA under the expert guidance of Dr Bev Ewen-Smith, the owner. He and his wife Jan run the observatory with B & B accommodation. Arrangements were made to have dinners there for five evenings per week. It was very much family style and everybody loved it. Jan is an excellent cook and we all gained weight, especially from her desserts. Other times we ate at local restaurants. One was up-market, noted for its fish and meat dishes. Another was a local hole-in-the-wall cafe specialising in chicken piri-piri (hot chilli) grilled over an open log fire. Also fun was lunch at a dockside marquee restaurant in Portimao serving mountains of all sorts of charcoal grilled fish and seafood.

The tour also included interesting towns, visits to potteries, drinks at pavement cafes or just taking in the sun on the patio or beach. Some people took the opportunity to fly over the area in a light plane piloted by Bev. The holiday was so successful that plans are underway to repeat it in the near future for people who missed out this time around.

Lyn Linse