



AZEITÃO, PORTUGAL



Azeitão is here.



The territory also includes two archipelagos in the Atlantic Ocean – Madeira and the Azores.

SUMMARY

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Most of the pictures shown on the next pages were taken from Wikipedia.

PORTUGAL A BRIEF HISTORY AND SOME GEOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Portugal, as we know it, dates back to the 12th century. The first king was Afonso Henriques, who is therefore considered the father of the country. However, we can clearly establish two great influences before that. In fact, there are obvious marks of the Roman and the Muslim presences in the territory.

Portugal's Golden Age, so to speak, was in the 15th and 16th centuries, during the Discoveries Adventure. It was a Portuguese navigator that established the route to India by sea and afterwards the Portuguese empire gradually stretched out to Africa, Asia, America and even Australasia.

Signs of military decline began with the Battle of Álcacer Quibir in Morocco in 1578, after which there was a dynastic union with Spain that lasted for 60 years.

Portugal experienced another golden period with King João V, but it was weakened with the great earthquake of 1755 that destroyed much of the capital city. Later on, during the Napoleonic Wars, the country was occupied.

In 1910 there was a revolution to depose the monarchy and since then Portugal has been a republic. A military coup occurred in 1926 that would later lead to a dictatorship that would last till 1974, when another coup established the democratic regime. After a long war, independence was granted to the country's African colonies. Brazil had obtained its own independent status in the 19th century.

Since the revolution in 1974, Portugal has undergone some very important changes. In the 1980s it became a member of the European Union.

Portugal is located in southwestern Europe. It is part of a larger geographic unit referred to as the Iberian Peninsula. The Portuguese territory has a total area of around 92.000 km² and it includes two archipelagoes in the Atlantic Ocean: Madeira and the Azores. The country's only borders are with Spain.

Portugal has a Mediterranean climate. Although there are differences from north to south (the north being a lot colder), this is one of the mildest climates in Europe.

THE REGION WE ARE IN – SURROUNDINGS

The area we are in is surrounded by two villages and a large city, which is the capital of our district.

Sesimbra is one of those villages. It has around 53.000 inhabitants and its mayor is responsible for an area of around 195 km². It is situated on the Atlantic Ocean, just at the mouth of the Sado River. As a result, many people go there in summer time, just to enjoy the lovely beach. Sesimbra is particularly famous for its beautiful nature which includes the Arrábida Hill and Cape Espichel. Among the traces left by other peoples in the area we can include the Muslim influences. The fortification in the village goes back to that time. During the expansion of the Portuguese territory (12th century), the castle was conquered by Afonso Henriques. It then again fell into Muslim domain and only at the beginning of the 13th century was it returned to King Sancho I.



Crossing the Arrábida Hill to the other side, we get to **Palmela**. This is a village of around 16.000 inhabitants. Going back in history, the Celts, the Romans and the Muslims are among the peoples that occupied

the region. In the 12th century, it was conquered by Afonso Henriques. As a matter of fact, due to its strategic location, Palmela was of great importance in the process of conquest and consolidation of the Portuguese territory. At present times, the village is famous for various reasons: its wine, its cheese and its castle are just some examples. The castle is of Arabic origin and was a reference during the 12th century as previously mentioned. In medieval times, it was the headquarters of a religious order. Later on, in the 15th century, a convent was built on the site, but the walls were also adapted for the use of artillery about 200 years later. A severe earthquake and the extinction of religious orders brought the fortress into oblivion. Nowadays, it is a national monument from which the visitor can have a truly astonishing perspective of the area.



Setúbal is situated 40 kilometres away from Lisbon. It is the capital of the district we are in. The total population is of about 125.000 inhabitants. The city is located on the northern bank of the estuary of the Sado River. This is where you can find a colony of dolphins, which are the city's symbol. Over there you can see the downtown area with attractive shops. Luísa Todi Avenue is the most important of its kind in the city. It is a good place for you to dine out at nice fish restaurant.

In the name of its most important avenue and square, Setúbal celebrates two very distinguished inhabitants: the already mentioned Luísa Todi and Bocage (an opera singer and a poet from the 18th / 19th century).

The most significant monument is Jesus Convent, dating from the 16th century. It is considered one of the first examples of the Portuguese Manueline style (gothic). It is a national monument.

Jesus Convent was founded in 1490 by the king's nurse (D. Manuel I), Justa Rodrigues Pereira. King João II asked for the project to be enlarged, giving it to an Italian architect called Diogo Boitaca in 1494. Two years later, it was occupied by nuns.

A tourist travelling from Setúbal to Azeitão crosses **Arrábida Natural Park**. This park covers an area of around 11.000 hectares and protects a type of Mediterranean vegetation and fauna. The protected area also includes the estuary of

the Sado River. From the highest spot in the hill (500 metres), the view from is amazing and that includes the lovely beaches.

Right in the heart of the park you find a convent dating from the 16th century, which blends perfectly into the natural surroundings. It is practically devoid of decorations. Inside the sculptures of Christ and saints are made of clay and wood. Shells and broken dishes are used in the decoration of fountains, walls and chapels. The convent used to house a group of Franciscan monks. Through the years, it has had various proprietors. Nowadays it belongs to a private foundation.



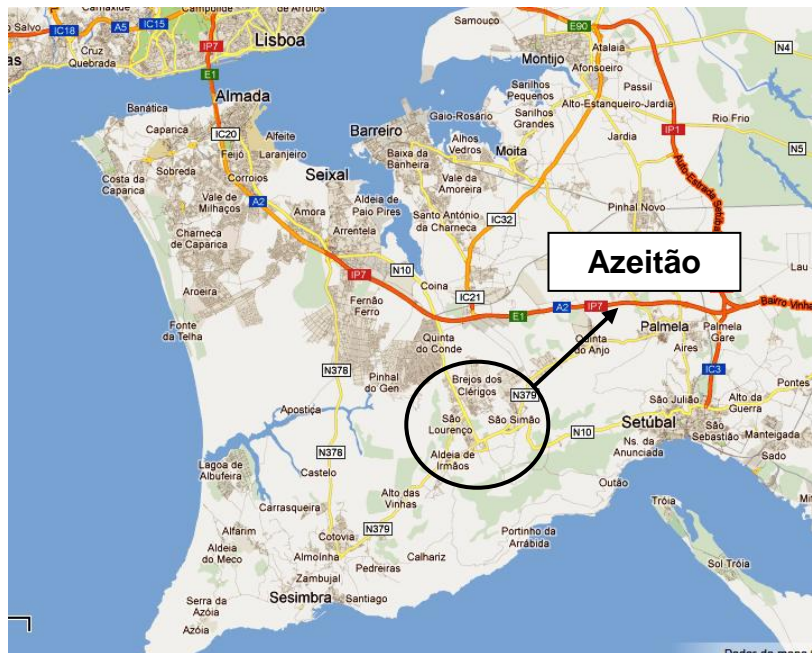
THE REGION WE ARE IN – AZEITÃO

Here is our village as described in the school's project:

Azeitão has already had administrative autonomy. In Vila Nogueira, formerly considered the most important part of the council, the symbol of municipal power is still standing and is well-maintained. Having lost the old statute, the two parishes – São Lourenço (St. Lawrence) and São Simão (St. Simon) now depend on Setúbal. The total area of Azeitão is of around 70 km². More than 13.000 people are known to be living here and the last years have registered a significant population growth.

As a matter of fact Azeitão is the name given to a group of various small villages. The Arrábida Hill, which is close by, is a distinguished characteristic in the area and marks not only its geography but also its economy and history. Thanks to a lucky combination of factors, it is on the slopes and valleys of Arrábida that a set of unique plants grow, which make exquisite cheese, wine, honey and so many other things. It is no accident that the Franciscans sought spiritual food here, by building a convent on the slope that goes down to the beach. It was not by chance that the Dukes of Aveiro built a most impressive palace here. The same happened with Albuquerque who built the Bacalhôa Estate. It was not a coincidence that led the José Maria da Fonseca Company to establish their headquarters in the region, along with other wine companies.

The first human settlements are said to have occurred here more than 30.000 years ago, their main activities being sheep grazing and agriculture. Besides that the Phoenicians are believed to have come to the area in search of raw materials for their dyeing industries. Among the other peoples that have left their strong mark, we can include the Romans and the Arabs.



PLACES OF REFERENCE IN AZEITÃO

Bacalhôa is one of the most beautiful farms dating from the first half of the 15 century still existing in Portugal. It used to belong to the Portuguese Royal House and then was passed on to noble families. In the 16th century, its proprietors enriched the building with beautiful tiles and an exquisite gazebo was built next to the lake. Also noticeable is the topiary puzzle in the garden.



Throughout the centuries, the estate has had several owners. It now belongs to a foundation, led by the Berardo family, who are also the proprietors of one of the wine companies in the area. It is a national monument.



Quinta das Torres was built in 1570, according to the wishes of Diogo d'Eça, after his long journey through Europe as a politician. This house constitutes one of the most beautiful houses with Italian style of the Renaissance in

Portugal. Also remarkable are the surrounding gardens. Throughout the centuries the estate has had various owners. Nowadays it is an exquisite rural hotel.

José Maria da Fonseca was founded in 1834. It is the oldest Portuguese producer of table wine as well as the famous Setúbal muscatel. Its founder was responsible for numerous innovations in the wine industry, going from the methods of working the land to machinery related to bottling the product. At present times, the company has the latest developments of the business sector along with a museum to show how it worked in the old days.



LOCAL CHEESE AND WINE

Our region is famous for its cheese, sweets and wine. Here is some information about two of these items.

Azeitão cheese is a Portuguese sheep cheese, which comes from the region of Azeitão. It is produced in the districts of Setúbal, Palmela and Sesimbra. It goes through a period of 20 days of healing and is commonly sold in vegetable paper. Its pulp is soft, having an aroma and flavour that somewhat resemble those of the Serra da Estrela cheese.



The history of Azeitão cheese dates back to the 19th century, specifically to 1830. Around this year, a farmer named Gaspar Henriques de Paiva reached Azeitão coming from Monsanto, near Serra da Estrela. Missing his homeland, he brought with him a specific variety of sheep: «bordaleira». Such sheep produced milk that was used in the manufacture of cheese. All this was done with the help of a cheese maker from Castelo Branco. This cheese maker taught other shepherds the secrets

of the manufacture of Serra cheese. The shepherds passed on, but the manufacturing techniques were improved from generation to generation.

The initial cheese weighed between 1 kg and 1.5 kg, as the originals of Serra da Estrela. However, this weight decreased for commercial reasons to the current 250 g.

It has already been mentioned that in Azeitão you can find the José Maria da Fonseca (JMF) wine cellars. There are two types of **Moscatel**: «Moscatel de Setúbal JMF» and «Moscatel Roxo» 20 years.



«Moscatel de Setúbal JMF»: with a topaz colour and with an orange shade, this wine has a fruity aroma (orange, grapefruit and apricot). Adjectives to classify it may include: fresh, very smooth and sleek. It is preferred by all ages.

The 20-year-old «Moscatel Roxo» is an exquisite dessert wine produced. This grape variety is almost extinct, existing only in a small vineyard in Azeitão. This is a purple grape variety, with an intense spicy aroma and a very concentrated fruity palate.