

Portugal's Representative Community

Language English

Tavira is Portugal's representative community for the inscription of the Mediterranean Diet as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO decided on December 4th, 2013 at the 8th Intergovernmental Conference held in Baku in Azerbaijan.

Tavira is located in the Algarve, the southernmost region of Portugal and also the most Mediterranean one, for its climate, productions and life styles.

The coastline includes *Ria Formosa* Natural Park, an internationally listed and protected ecosystem, made of barrier islands and marshland, considered to be the most productive areas of the biosphere.

The "*barrocal*", a transition area between the sea and the mountains, with loamy and chalky soils, preserves a diverse and adapted flora, the "dryland orchard" being a striking feature of these territories covered in olive trees, almond trees, carob trees and fig trees. With the Portuguese' travels around the world other products arrived, such as the citrus groves which exist in the whole region.

In the **mountain** we come across the characteristic Mediterranean forest or wood, with activities of community farming, stock breeding, apiculture, hunting and handicraft.

Tavira is a historical city, nowadays also a tourist one, with different heritages resulting from the presence of civilizations of the Mediterranean Antiquity, such as Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs/Berbers, confirmed by the archaeological works and the unearthed materials.

It is an estuarine city closely linked with the Portuguese Discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries, the largest city of the Algarve at that time, where the Portuguese fleet that patrolled Gibraltar, North Africa and the Algarve coast would spend the winter.

The military and religious heritage, the 21 churches and chapels of various styles within the 66 hectares of the Historical Centre show the intensity of Christianisation, the influence of the religious orders and mercantile aristocracy's power. The Mediterranean town planning reveals itself in the structure of the squares and alleyways and the neighbourly relations, the "*telhados de tesouro*" (pagoda roofs) and the "lattice doors" which mark the city's appearance.

This heritage is alive in the populations' social practices and customs, namely in productive activities, cyclical festivities and the food culture with products and dishes characteristic of each time of the year.