

Ludo Trails



View over one of the Ludo's salt marshes

Civil Parish: Montenegro (Faro) and Almancil (Loulé)

Municipality: Faro and Loulé

Location: Ludo

How to get there: head towards Aeroporto de Faro on the N125 and then turn towards Praia de Faro. Turn right to Estrada da Praia (to begin the hike at Vale das Almas) or go straight ahead to the parking lot leading to the beach (to begin the hike near the beach parking lot).

Type: walking and cycling

Circular trail: no, linear

Distance: 8,4 km

Average duration: 2h to 3h

Cumulative elevation gain: 40 metres D+ (start near Vale das Almas), 70 metres D+ (start near the airport).

Type of path: dirt paths

When to visit: all year

Approval: no

Signposted: no signage, but there are some information boards and directional arrows.

Specific features: the trail is located in the Ria Formosa Natural Park (PNRF) and the Ria Formosa/Castro Marim Natura 2000 Site.

Points of interest: aquatic birds, pine forest and lagoon habitats (silt banks, salt marshes and dunes), saltpan complex.

Owners: public paths

Responsible Party: Sociedade Polis Litoral Ria Formosa, S.A.



The cistanche, one of the most eye-catching salt marsh species



Salt deposit extracted from the industrial salt ponds, which you can see along the route

This trail follows the border between the land environment and the lagoon system of Ria Formosa and lets you visit different habitats: forest areas, salt marshes and salt pans.

A – In Vale das Almas, the trail advances through a lush patch of stone pine, where you can also find maritime pine and some eucalyptus. You can also easily spot the great tit, the Eurasian hoopoe and the azure-winged magpie. This is also the habitat of two rare plants exclusive to the Algarve: *the Thymus lotocephalus* and the *Tuberaria major*.

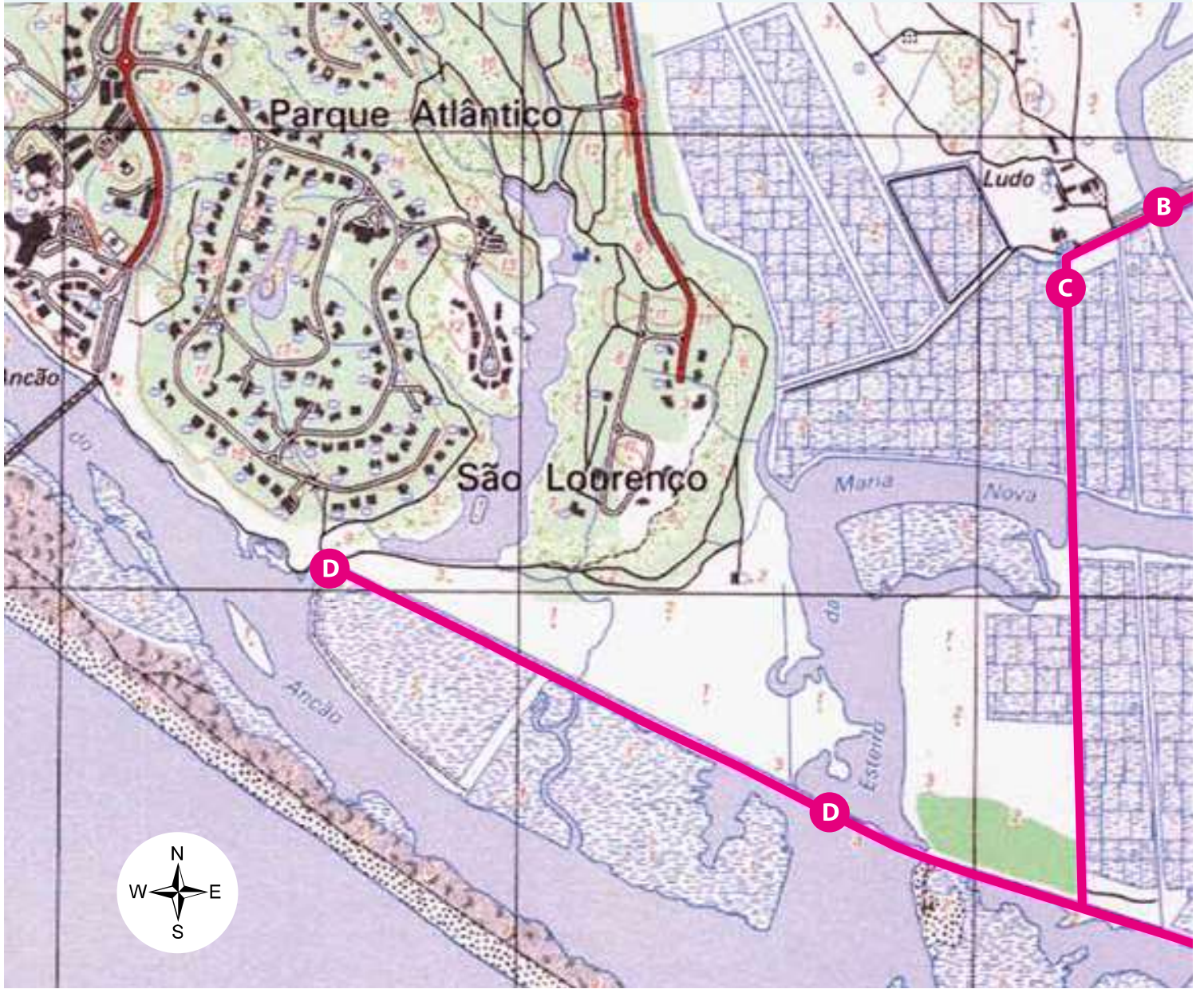
B – The final stretch of the São Lourenço river, north of the dirt path, is the only source of freshwater around. A big floodgate makes sure salt water and freshwater don't mix. There is a dense, marshy vegetation here, and aquatic birds like ducks, pochards, grebes and coots are common. During the winter there are great gatherings of Eurasian wigeons and northern shovelers.

C – The view stretches over a large system of creeks and salt pans, from where what was once called *white gold* is extracted. Next

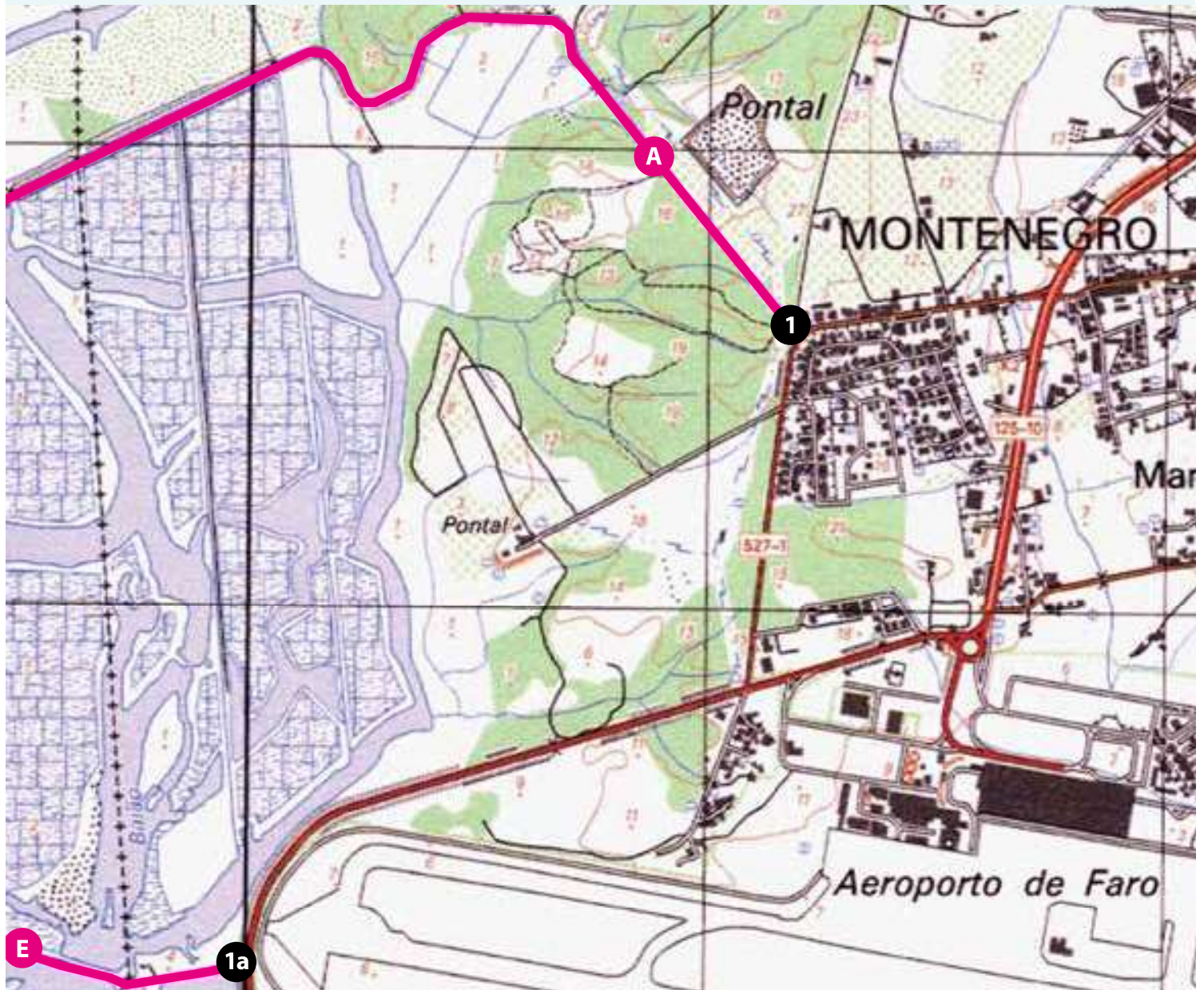
to the path, a large, clear mound of salt shines under the sun; salt production is an industrial activity here. Nevertheless, birds like the flamingo appreciate these hyper-saline reservoirs of shallow water, teeming with nutritious invertebrate critters.

D – To reach the bird observatory, you have to cross the lagoon area and its salt marshes. On the silt banks, during low-tide, it is possible to see *Uca tangeri* crabs, shorebirds (equipped with special beaks to pick through the silt) and fisherman catching cockles and grooved carpet shells.

E – Along the path separating Ludo from the lagoon, the view will open to the Ancão peninsula and its dunes. The dunes progressively give away to a small fishing settlement and summer houses. The walls lining the path are covered with a plant exclusive to the south, the *Limoniastrum monopetalum*, a shrub of exuberant lilac foliage, adapted to the surrounding salinity.

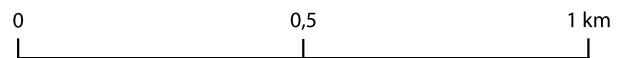


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Start of the trail

1 – 37° 01' 45.86" N 7° 58' 29.71" W
1a – 37° 01' 00.59" N 7° 59' 17.97" W



 Trail

