

Visit the Benagil cave in Portugal: by boat, on foot or in a kayak



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By Floriane

You want to visit the famous **Benagil cave** and you're probably wondering :

- **How to visit the Benagil cave on your Algarve road trip?**
- **Which tour to choose?**
- Or **whether you can walk or swim to it?**

Good news, you've clearly come to the right place. During our road trip to the Algarve, the **Benagil cave** was one of the must-sees. And like many travelers, we quickly realized that this ultra-popular site raises a **lot of questions...** and a few preconceived ideas.

In this article, we share with you **our opinion, the different ways of visiting the cave, what you absolutely need to know before going**, and above all **our recommendations for excursions in French**, to avoid unpleasant surprises.

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Key facts : Benagil cave

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- ☐ **Recommended access:** kayak or boat
 - ☐ **Access on foot:** impossible
 - ☐ **Swimming access:** prohibited
 - ☐ ♂ **Randonnée des Sept Vallées Suspendues**
 - ☐ **Level of frequentation:** very high in summer
-

Our hotel near the cave

- ☐ ☐ [Information and reservation for the hotel Algar Papa Rooms](#) with pool and oceanfront parking

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Where is the Benagil cave?

The **Benagil Grotto** is located on the south coast of Portugal, in the Algarve, just off the **village of Benagil**, near the villages of [Armação de Pêra](#) and **Carvoeiro**.

□ Here are some ideas of distances from the main Algarve villages:

- [Visit the Benagil cave from the village of Armação de Pêra](#): ~10 km
 - We recommend staying at [the Algar Papa Rooms hotel](#) with pool and parking by the ocean.
- [Book a 2h30 boat trip to observe dolphins and geological formations including Benagil](#). from Albufeira ~28 km
- [From Faro](#): ~55 km

Why is the Benagil cave so famous?

It's **one of Europe's most famous sea caves**, recognizable by its huge dome pierced by a circular hole that lets the light in. The Benagil cave became world-famous because it was used as the background image on Windows 10.

The limestone rock of the coastline has been **shaped by the sea over time**, hollowed out by erosion to form a vast cavity.

The ceiling then **partially collapsed**, revealing a **large circular hole**, called an *algar*, which illuminates the interior of the cave.

□ The result: an almost unreal setting, with slightly pinkish sand on the floor, golden walls and natural light that changes according to the time of day.

Can you visit the Benagil cave on foot or by swimming?

This is one of **the most frequently asked questions**:

□ **Access on foot: NO**

There is no access to the cave on foot.

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The coastal path (including the **7 hanging valleys** hike) only allows you to **see the hole from above**, but **not to descend into the cave**.

☐ **Swimming access: NO (and dangerous)**

This is officially **forbidden**, for various reasons:

- strong currents
- heavy boat traffic (see below for tips on avoiding the crowds)
- unpredictable waves

Visit the Benagil cave by boat or kayak

Visit the Benagil cave by kayak (our favourite option ♥)

For us, **kayaking or paddling is the best way to visit the Benagil cave**.

Why?

- the distance from the beach is very short: 10 minutes by train
- we were able to enter **the cave directly** by parking the kayak on the sand

☐ We recommend this well-organized **1-hour French kayaking excursion** with

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[Kayak Secret Algarve](#) departing from Benagil (approx. €25). We were also able to visit other, less touristy caves.

In a nutshell,

- ☐ **Departure directly from the village of Benagil**
- ☐ **Small group** (maximum 10 people)
- ☐☐ **English-speaking guide**

Remember to book in advance, especially during school vacations.

☐ [Book a kayak trip to the Benagil cave \(FR guide\)](#)

☐ We recommend that if it's available, you [book the 8am slot](#) (although we're well aware that's early for a vacation get-up), so you can have the privilege of a quiet, uncrowded visit inside. From 10 a.m. there's a parade of canoes and boats, as this is one of the Algarve's most popular tourist sites.

By booking via [Get Your Guide](#): *the big advantage, in our opinion, is that **you can change or cancel your booking up to the day before**, with a simple click on the application, which is always reassuring to be able to change your plans according to the weather.*

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Visit the Benagil cave by boat

Obviously, a boat is the **easiest** option, especially if you don't want to paddle.

△ Worth knowing:

Most boats are **not allowed to disembark in the cave**.

It can be seen **from the water**, which is still impressive, but less immersive than kayaking.

□ [Take a look at this boat trip from the village of Benagil in French](#)

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□ **Combine Benagil cave + dolphin watching**

This outing combines **two of the Algarve's must-sees in a single activity**: the discovery of the famous sea caves, including Benagil, **and dolphin-watching in the open sea**. The Algarve coast is particularly renowned for the presence of **numerous dolphins**, often observed in groups, which makes the experience both fun and impressive, especially for children.

This is the kind of activity that makes a holiday: sailing along the cliffs, entering spectacular caves, then heading out to sea in search of dolphins, all **supervised by a French-speaking guide** who explains the animals' behavior and the formation of the coastline.

□ [Benagil caves + dolphins cruise \(guide FR\)](#) ideal for families

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Visit the cave on foot

It is also possible to see Benagil cave **from the top of the cliffs**, by taking the famous **Seven Hanging Valleys hike** which links **Praia da Marinha** to **Praia de Vale de Centeanes** and passes just **above Benagil cave**, fact :

☐ **approx. 5.7 km (one-way)** - [full itinerary on the All trails website](#)

- ☐ **Walking time:** 2h30 to 3h without long breaks (more like 4h if you take the time to enjoy the viewpoints)
- ☐ **Round trip:** ~11 to 12 km
- ☐ **Level:** easy to moderate (well-marked path, but some ascents/descents)
- ☐ **Main attraction:** plunging views of cliffs, natural arches, beaches and **Benagil cave from above.**

☐ If you don't want to do **the whole hike**, you can park in a parking lot 10 minutes from the cave and then just go and admire the hole from above and the surrounding cliffs.

Our recommendation: explore the cave from the water in the morning, then go for a hike in the late afternoon.

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How to get to Benagil?

- **By car**, if you have [rented a car](#), there are several parking lots in the village of Benagil and you can rent a kayak.
- **By boat** from several Algarve villages such as [Albufeira](#), [Portimão](#), [Armação de Pêra](#)...
- **On foot** from **Praia da Marinha** or **Praia de Vale de Centeanes**, following the **Seven Hanging Valleys trail** which passes **just above the cave**.
- **By public transport** (less convenient): buses available to Lagos or Carvoeiro, info and bookings on the [Vamus Algarve](#) company.

Our opinion on the Benagil cave

The Benagil cave is clearly one of **the Algarve's most emblematic sites**. Impressive in both size and light, it's well worth a visit during your stay in the region.

However, the experience may **vary depending on the time of day, the season and the type of visit chosen**.

We advise you to plan your visit well in advance, as a well-organized visit to the grotto is a wonderful experience, especially when combined with exploration of the surrounding coastline.

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Don't hesitate to leave us a **note** or **5 stars** below, to let us know if you're planning this trip, to ask any questions you may have, below we'll answer you with great pleasure.

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