

The old power station

Experience the sea with all your senses

In April 1910, the paraffin lamps that had previously been common in the city centre of Faro were replaced with electric lights. The first sub-station was built by a company from Lisbon in a building at the level crossing and ferry jetty at Portas do Mar. In the beginning, the new service did not always work the way it should - the street lamps flickered on, went out and then flickered on again. This was acknowledged by the citizens of Faro with an ironic smile. "Magellan is coming", was the cynical cry; everyone knew that the world-renowned Portuguese sailor and defector, sailing for the Spanish Crown, had never come back.

Fifty years later, the electrical capacity was no longer sufficient to supply the city, so a new sub-station was built on the edge of town. The Faro fire brigade moved into the old building, before moving on to a more modern building in the 1990's.

In 1997, after further conversion work, the Centro Ciência Viva do Algarve, an interactive science museum, took up residence in the former power station. Over the course of the years it has become established as a comprehensive centre for marine biology. 'Experiencing the sea with all the senses' is the motto of the museum, as is clear from the very beginning of the extensive displays.

You are taken through the geological genes of the Algarve in 30 stages, coming across sea plants and marine life from tropical and Arctic waters in marine aquariums - just as thrilling as the Lisbon Oceanarium, though on a smaller scale.

In the adjacent glass house you can get to know the flora of the Faro lagoon. Renewable energy is produced in the garden using tidal power and wind, and the potential for the creation of renewable energy off the coast is illustrated. The tour finishes on the roof. By prior arrangement you can go up there after dark and observe the night sky over the Algarve through a telescope.

This article was provided by Catrin George Ponciano and features in her book '111 Places along the Algarve that you Shouldn't Miss' - on sale in the Algarve at FNAC stores or available on Amazon: ISBN: 978 374 090 381 0.

The Science Museum is located at Rua Comandante Manuel N.º.41 in Faro - close to Hotel EVA. It is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10h00 to 18h00. www.ccvalg.pt



After a visit to the museum, a boat trip through the coastal lagoon and nature reserve of the Ria Formosa is an excellent idea. Various companies offer trips to the islands of Culatra, Farol, Ilha Deserta and Armona from the quay at the Portas do Mar city gate in Faro.