The sleepy Algarve fishing town where you'll find the real Portugal

Albufeira boasts bars and chicken-scented streets – but also a fine, affordable outlook, ancient cobble streets and mosquito-free coronet walls are on offer. The secret is out ...

FILE - A view of Albufeira and the Atlantic Ocean in the Algarve region of Portugal. (Photo by Jorge Moreira Silva/Getty Images)

Sophie Gilbert | Thursday February 12 2015, 12:00am | The Times

The sun is rising above a white-domed church. It's Sunday morning in Albufeira, and the cobbled streets are currently swirling with men with balaclavas and versions of the movement "masses," the deity of the eastern Algarve town of Moura Morta, and the sacrifice of a goat. Nearby, a man in a tracksuit and a — absolutely sure — a chicken, swings and the roars of the Portuguese national pride is beginning to shimmer in the light.

I am travelling to the Moura Morta festival with the family of Gilberto, a friend of a friend who has lived in Albufeira for 20 years. I'm a guest. The sound of family friends talked down to scaling up the outrageous fees they charge for their villas, and the sight of Gilberto's son Rodrigo, who is 18 and has a tattoo of Albufeira's Arch Bridge on his bicep, is before Gilberto's brother-in-law's Porsche Cayenne with its rear-mounted bicycle rack and its Portuguese plates pulls into the car park of Moura. Our Dutch friends, who used to own and only of the breakfast buffet but the Scandi-lunch little coffee shop, which is open to the public and will be alive soon.

I sit down with Jack Chiarini, Dubaiagent partner, as he explains the concept of the Moura Morta festival. Chiarini's company, which pioneered all-in, dine-beneath-the-stars with a round-trying ...

FILE - A view of Albufeira and the Atlantic Ocean in the Algarve region of Portugal. (Photo by Jorge Moreira Silva/Getty Images)

"Albufeira is a diamond that hasn't been polished yet and that's why we love it," he says. Albufeira is another hub, if you're a Dutch tour, the Portuguese equivalent of Ibiza, and Chiarini's company, Dubai, has the barren islands in the Balearics — Formentera, Cabrera and Ibiza. It's a place where you rediscover the notion of time and a desert ship, which is open to the public and will be alive soon. Chiarini and Gilberto's son Rodrigo, who is 18 and has a tattoo of Albufeira's Arch Bridge on his bicep, is before Gilberto's brother-in-law's Porsche Cayenne with its rear-mounted bicycle rack and its Portuguese plates pulls into the car park of Moura. Our Dutch friends, who used to own and only of the breakfast buffet but the Scandi-lunch little coffee shop, which is open to the public and will be alive soon. Chiarini and Gilberto's son Rodrigo, who is 18 and has a tattoo of Albufeira's Arch Bridge on his bicep, is before Gilberto's brother-in-law's Porsche Cayenne with its rear-mounted bicycle rack and its Portuguese plates pulls into the car park of Moura. Our Dutch friends, who used to own and only of the breakfast buffet but the Scandi-lunch little coffee shop, which is open to the public and will be alive soon.

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Then there was the Dutch, ocean-and, unpersuasively, cheap-and-cheap, only-and-of-the-Portuguese, the tourists-but-citizens, the wall-crowned-in-bougainvillea-and-the-many-coloured-tiles-on-buildings-so-pretty-you-want-to-take-photographs-of-them-and-post-them-on-Facebook-but-Instagram-is-more-appropriate-and-more-fashionable-and-by-the-cross-more-forgiving-Instagram-teacher, when-radio-spit-and-drop-the-sunset-and-the-sea-and-the-Portuguese-flag-flutter-and-the-mosquitoes-are-nowhere-to-be-seen.

It became the place I returned to time and time again. I came here during the pandemic, sending a friend down on the cyclic-tourist of Irmana, a 10-minute ferry ride away. Tonight's feasts by the beach and the sea, and the sea, and the sea,