



SELF-SUPPORTED AND ADVENTURE CYCLING EVENT
ACROSS BAIXO ALENTEJO IN ONE-STAGE

ADVENTURE MANUAL

AUG. 2022 - V-1.2



- GRAVEL BIRDS ULTRACYCLING -

'Gravel Birds Ultracycling' is a self-supported ultracycling challenge across Alentejo region in one-stage. Along the 75% off-road route with approximately 750KM & 7.500M of climbing, long-distance cyclists will face the Alentejo hills from the inland areas of the Guadiana Valley to the Atlantic coast. The bikepacking adventure starts with the sunrise on September 12th in Castro Verde. Meeting point in the village during the weekend of September 10-11th. Welcome to the inaugural edition of the first ultracycling gravel event in Portugal!

KEY DATES

Accreditation and Briefing

_ September 11th 18:00 | Sunday

Official Start

_ September 12th Sunrise (07:12:53) | Monday

Time Limit

_ September 17th Sunset (19:39:38) | Saturday

WEBSITE & EMAIL

_ gravelbirds.cc

_ ultracycling@gravelbirds.cc

RULES

1 | RESPECT THE LOCAL TRAFFIC RULES, THE COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

We are a community who wants to build a positive legacy. The way you behave will shape how society and institutions will look to ultracycling and long-distance cyclists.

2 | RIDE THE SET ROUTE:

If you go off the route (accommodation, food, etc), then return in the same exact point. The GPS live tracking will show us if you are on the route and your tracker should always be on.

3 | NO THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT:

You aren't allowed to receive help from family, friends and other participants with food, accommodation or mechanical support (riders in the duo category can help each other). Sum up, you should use the commercial services available for all riders. If you have a mechanical problem you should solve it by your own. If you can't solve it, you can use the commercial mechanical services available.

4 | NO DRAFTING:

You cannot follow other participants, cyclists or vehicles for aerodynamical advantages.

5 | USE YOUR OWN ENERGY:

e-bikes aren't allowed or any kind of 'artificial' help.

SAFETY

A | PERSONAL INSURANCE (MANDATORY)

Personal cycling insurance covering protection and civil liability is mandatory for all participants. Riders who aren't living in Portugal must have personal insurance also covering repatriation in case of severe physical injuries or death. We will ask for a proof of insurance and we will not allow participants to ride without a valid insurance. We want to make clear that - from the organization perspective - 'Gravel Birds Ultracycling' isn't a race. It's simultaneously a personal challenge and a collective cycling adventure. An opportunity to face your own physical and emotional limits while other adventurers are doing the same. Individually, in community. We won't provide any kind of cash/prizes and we will collect and publish riders' results and times only for information and recreation purposes.

B | MANDATORY ITEMS

Helmet, front and rear lights (including backup lights), a reflective vest (and clothes making you visible as possible) and an emergency insulated blanket.

C | ACCREDITATION & BRIEFING (MANDATORY)

We will verify together (organization and participants) - during the accreditation & briefing session - the rules/manifesto and the mandatory items.

THE ROUTE

The route of 'Gravel Birds Ultracycling' is 75% off road and with approximately 750 kilometers & 7.500 meters of climbing. There are two Control/Check Points (CP) and three sections:

Section 1 (start to CP1) | Time Limit: September 13th Sunset (19:44:10)

Castro Verde > Pomarão

196 km | 1760 m d+

Starting in Castro Verde, the first kilometers of Gravel Birds run through the open plains of "Campo Branco", the heart of the Alentejo pseudo-steppe.

The roads have – in general – a smooth surface and the slopes are gentle, allowing a fast progression. However, in these first kilometers there are some barriers or gates that may require several stops. It is very important to close again all closed gates you found, because of the cattle and to guarantee a healthy coexistence between cyclists and land owners. However, don't worry because you will mostly face this situation only during the first kilometers of the route.

With the proximity of the Guadiana Valley, the landscape becomes wilder and the terrain more irregular. Take the opportunity to resupply in the village of Mosteiro in the only existing cafe, as you will have more than 20 kilometers ahead without any support point. With the approach to Beja, the terrain becomes practically flat again and between Beja and Serpa part of the route is asphalt/tarmac, almost always along rural roads and without car traffic. In case of need, there is the only specialized bicycle shop along the route in Beja, in addition to the existing shop in Castro Verde.

After crossing the Guadiana River, the territory will once again become quite wild. Take advantage of the passage in Serpa to replenish your supplies, as the next section will be one of the most remote of the entire route. Between the villages of Santa Iria and Corte Sines, it will be an authentic roller-coaster as you cross the deep valleys that flank the Guadiana.

After Mina de São Domingos it will be predominately downhill to CP1 in Pomarão, but that doesn't make life easier. The route is along the old train line of an abandoned old mine. Many of the bridges are destroyed and you have to go around them on foot. There are also several tunnels that you have to go through from the inside or go around from the outside (some tunnels are obstructed by vegetation or landslides, and there is an alternative trail around it).

CP1 is located at the entrance to the village of Pomarão, next to the public washrooms. Good spot to take a siesta, before ride towards to Mértola.

Section 2 (CP1 to CP2) | Time Limit: Sept. 16th Sunset (19:44:00)

Pomarão > Vila Nova de Milfontes

265 km | 3160 m d+

After CP1 in Pomarão, it is necessary to go up again heading Mértola. The ascent is long, but the surface is excellent and offers no major difficulties. Upon arrival in Mértola, still on the opposite side of the river, you have to go down a rather steep (but short) pedestrian trail and it might not be the best idea to try to descend it on your bike. Mértola will be the location with the greatest offer of services in the next 180 kilometers, so take the opportunity to buy all necessary supplies. After passing through Mértola, the terrain is again gently undulating and quite fluid. The gravel roads are of supreme quality and the asphalt sections (almost always traffic-free) are magnificent for pedaling.

With the approach to the Vascão stream, which marks the border with the Algarve region, the terrain becomes more irregular and announces the difficulties that arise in crossing Serra do Caldeirão. Along the entire Serra do Caldeirão there are few villages and not all of them have services. After passing through Pico do Mú, the highest point on the route and in Baixo Alentejo, the village of São Barnabé may be the best chance to reload your supplies. After that, apart from one or another cafe, only in Santa Clara-a-Velha or Sabóia you won't be able to find many options of services before arriving in Odemira.

With the proximity of the sea, the landscape gradually begins to change. The territory is no longer so remote and it becomes easier to find restaurants, accommodation and other services. Whenever possible, the route follows the sea and off-road, but there are some asphalt sections, including the crossing of the Mira River when reaching Vila Nova de Milfontes. CP2 is located next to Milfontes Lighthouse, a few meters from the beach. Perfect for a dip in the ocean and for a power nap on the sand.



Section 3 (CP2 to finish) | Time Limit: Sept. 17th Sunset (19:39:38)

Vila Nova de Milfontes > Castro Verde

282 km | 2430 m d+

After passing the CP2 in Vila Nova de Milfontes, the route continues heading north along the coast to Porto Côvo. Between Praia do Malhão and Ilha do Pessegueiro there is a short sector on very sandy ground and where it will be necessary to hike-a-bike a bit.

A few kms after passing through Porto Côvo, Gravel Birds will definitely leave the coastline and return to inland. The village of Cercal will be a strategic place to resupply, as during the next 120 kilometers there are only small villages with just a few services. The terrain will be a little more wrinkled, but far from the difficulties felt in crossing the Serra do Caldeirão. Around k522.7, when passing through a farm, watch out for the guard dogs. They are medium-sized and protective, but they don't seem dangerous.

The approach to Almodôvar marks the return to the plain. Until the end, only a few occasional climbs will break the gently undulating landscape. Almodôvar, Ourique and Aljustrel will be the main points for replenishing groceries, although in the various villages it is almost always possible to find a cafe or grocery store. Once again, after Almodôvar, there are medium-sized dogs, but not aggressive type.

Almost on the final stretch, passing through Aljustrel, take the opportunity to buy the necessary supplies. Until the end in Castro Verde, it will be about 50 kilometers without passing through any village. The approach to Castro Verde and the end of 'Gravel Birds Ultracycling' will be an almost mystical experience, specially if you do it at the end of the day. The open plains of "Campo Branco", almost devoid of vegetation, are postcard landscapes that remind us of an almost-exotic imagery. With luck, they may even cross paths with a flock of majestic Great bustards, the queens of the steppe.



POINTS OF INTEREST (POIs)

POI	From start (km)	Leg (km)	Gain (m+)	Type	Services & Notes
Castro Verde	0	0	0	start	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, hospital, pharmacy, bike shop
S. Pedro das Cabeças	6	6	80	viewpoint	cultural heritage
S. Marcos da Ataboeira	22,1	16,1	120	village	cafe, shop, public toilet
Monte do Salto	28,2	6,1	50	small village	cafe
Aracelis	31,1	2,9	100	viewpoint	cultural heritage
Corte Pequena	34,5	3,4	0	small village	cafe, fountain
Azinhäl	41,3	6,8	50	small village	public toilet
Mosteiro	54,2	12,9	90	small village	cafe, public toilet
Cabeça Gorda	76,5	22,3	200	village	cafe, restaurant, shop
Santa Clara do Louredo	86,1	9,6	40	small village	cafe, shop, fountain
Beja	93,9	7,8	80	city	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, hospital, pharmacy, bike shop
Quintos	112	18,1	70	small village	cafe
Serpa	125,8	13,8	210	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, hospital, pharmacy
Santa Iria	134,4	8,6	40	small village	cafe
Corte Sines	164,8	30,4	390	small village	cafe
Mina de S. Domingos	177,5	12,7	100	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation
Abandoned mining railroad	178	0,5	0	DANGER	abandoned mining area, collapsed tunnels, broken bridges, hike-a-bike sections
Santana de Cambas	184,5	6,5	80	small village	cafe, restaurant
CP1 - Pomarão	196,1	11,6	85	checkpoint	mandatory Checkpoint 1

POI	From start (km)	Leg (km)	Gain (m+)	Type	Services & Notes
CP1 - Pomarão	196,1	11,6	85	checkpoint	mandatory Checkpoint 1
Picoitos	203,2	7,1	160	small village	cafe, public toilet
Tamejoso	207,9	4,7	30	small village	cafe, fountain
Fernandes	210,1	2,2	40	small village	cafe, restaurant, public toilet
Danger - steep singletrack	214,2	4,1	20	DANGER	steep hiking trail, recommended hike-a-bike
Mértola	216,4	2,2	10	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Alvares	236,2	19,8	290	small village	cafe, fountain
Penilhos	242,6	6,4	60	small village	cafe, shop, public toilet
Martinhanes	243,6	1	10	small village	cafe
Água Santa da Herdade	247,1	3,5	0	thermal spring	traditional local SPA
S. Miguel do Pinheiro	255,5	8,4	110	small village	cafe, restaurant, bakery
S. Pedro de Solis	264,7	9,2	140	small village	cafe, restaurant, public toilet
Fialho	269,9	5,2	40	small village	bakery
Santa Cruz	273,6	3,7	30	small village	cafe
Pico do Mu	299	25,4	480	viewpoint	highest point on route at 574m
Felizes	302,7	3,7	70	small village	cafe, public toilet with showers/hot water
S. Barnabé	310,2	7,5	40	small village	cafe, restaurant, public toilet, fountain
Rio Torto	332,5	22,3	330	roadside cafe	cafe, restaurant
Monte da Ribeira	337,3	4,8	10	small village	cafe, public toilet
Barragem de Santa Clara	349,8	12,5	220	dam	cafe, accommodation, public toilet
Santa Clara a Velha	355,3	5,5	60	small village	cafe, shop, public toilet
Saboia	360,9	5,6	80	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, public toilet, pharmacy
Odemira	392,9	32	300	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, hospital, pharmacy
S. Teotónio	413	20,1	310	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Praia do Carvalhal	423,6	10,6	60	beach	cafe, camping

Zambujeira do Mar	427,6	4	60	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, pharmacy
Porto das Barcas	430,7	3,1	10	small village	cafe, restaurant
Cavaleiro	440,7	10	70	small village	cafe, restaurant, shop
Almograve	447,7	7	20	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation
Longueira	449,5	1,8	20	small village	cafe, restaurant, shop
Vila Nova de Milfontes	459	9,5	60	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, pharmacy
CP2 - Milfontes	460,5	1,5	0	checkpoint	mandatory Checkpoint 2

POI	From start (km)	Leg (km)	Gain (m+)	Type	Services & Notes
CP2 - Milfontes	460,5	1,5	0	checkpoint	mandatory Checkpoint 2
hike-a-bike section	469,4	8,9	80	hike-a-bike	sandy seaside trail with 4km+ (50% hike-a-bike)
Camping Ilha Pessegueiro	476,3	6,9	50	camping	camping
Porto Côvo	478,3	2	10	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, camping, pharmacy
Sonega	490,4	12,1	190	small village	cafe, accommodation
Cercal	502,2	11,8	60	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, accommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Aldeia do Cano	509,9	7,7	40	small village	cafe
Danger - guard dogs	520,4	10,5	140	DANGER	farm with several medium size guard dogs
Barreiros	527,2	6,8	90	small village	cafe, restaurant
Amoreiras Gare	536,6	9,4	110	small village	cafe, shop
Garvão	545,5	8,9	30	small village	cafe, restaurant, shop, public toilet
Barragem Monte da Rocha	553,5	8	110	dam	cafe
Camping Monte da Rocha	554,7	1,2	0	camping	camping
Castro da Cola	574,7	20	150	historical site	restaurant, accommodation, historical heritage
Taberna Cabrita	581,2	6,5	110	roadside cafe	cafe
Gomes Aires	594,2	13	140	small village	cafe, restaurant
Santa Clara a Nova	600,8	6,6	100	small village	cafe, restaurant, shop, public toilet
Almodôvar	617,4	16,6	140	village	

					cafe, restaurant, shop, acommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Danger - guard dogs	621,6	4,2	40	DANGER	farm with several medium size guard dogs
Corte Zorrinho	628,7	7,1	40	small village	cafe, restaurant, shop
Ourique	646,9	18,2	100	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, acommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Estação de Ourique	660,5	13,6	110	small village	cafe
Aivados	662	1,5	10	small village	cafe
Casevel	665,9	3,9	40	small village	cafe
Aljustrel	687,2	21,3	190	village	cafe, restaurant, shop, acommodation, hospital, pharmacy
Castro Verde	740,2	53	330	finish	cafe, restaurant, shop, acommodation, camping, hospital, pharmacy, bike shop

PARTICIPATION SCENARIOS

IF I HAVE A MECANICAL PROBLEM | Try to solve it by yourself (this is a self-supported challenge). If you can't fix the problem, go to a bike shop (or similar commercial services) by your own or using any kind of public transportation (Taxi, Bus, Train) and then return to the exactly same point where you left the route.

IF I HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY | (If possible) Call always first the medical emergency: 112.

IF I FACE A SITUATION THAT DOESN'T ALLOW ME TO FOLLOW THE ROUTE | The event and the route was designed to avoid this kind of situations, but it is impossible to control and predict what happens in 750KM, specially 75% off road. If you face a closed road/trail, farmers/hunters/property owners that don't allow you at all to follow the route, contact the "Race" Director.

IF I DECIDE TO ABANDON | Inform the "Race" Director and return to Castro Verde by your own.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I FINISH | Someone of the 'Gravel Birds' crew will be there to welcome you.

I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS | Contact us via email: ultracycling@gravelbirds.cc

"RACE" DIRECTOR CONTACT | +351 91 88 78 360 | phone number only available during the event period and during the weekend before the event (between Saturday 10th and Saturday 17th September).



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