

LUZ

SUN, SAND - AND SOMETHING ELSE

When people talk about Luz, they usually mean Praia da Luz — a small fishing village, 6 kms. west of Lagos. Like every other resort on the Algarve coast, it offers sun and sand. But Luz has its own very special appeal and neither residents nor visitors can quite define it. It's sun, sand — and something else.

There are three roads leading into Luz. One from Lagos, another from the village of Espiche, and the third from Burgau. To get the full impact of Luz, one should see it first from the Burgau road. Driving east from Burgau, you come around a curve. Geranium-covered walls on your left, fields sloping down to the sea on your right. And suddenly you see it. A magnificent headland, rising hundreds of feet above the sea. Below it, the red roofs and white walls of Praia da Luz, the church steeple and the tower of the Fortaleza.

The headland is quite unforgettable. It makes a lasting impression on the minds of almost anyone who sees it. This is the image that the tourists take home from their holidays, that the young men of the village took with them to the wars in Angola, Guinéa and Mozambique.

Foreigners began coming to Luz over twenty years ago, when it was nothing more than a tiny fishing and farming community tucked in among the almond trees and the fig trees at the foot of the headland. It had a safe, sheltered beach and a peaceful,

tranquil atmosphere. Just the place to get away from it all.

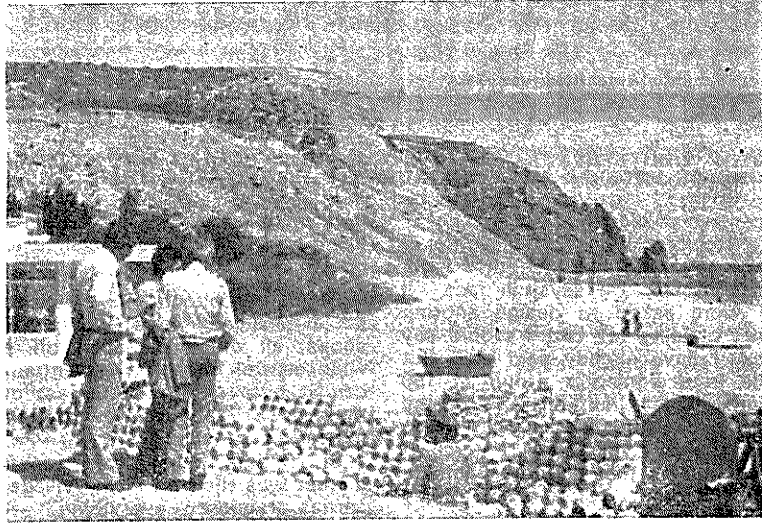
One by one, foreigners began to buy land and build houses. But the village remained very much the same.

The developers came and they bought land and built new houses

by the dozens.

The tourists came. By the hundreds. By the thousands.

But no-one — not the foreigners, not the developers, not the tourists — no-one has ever taken away from Luz what Luz really is. There are still farmers.



There are still fishermen. There is still the headland, still the beach. And most of all, there is still the community. A living, breathing, Portuguese community.

An English visitor said: "It isn't just a plastic village. You really know you're in Portugal."

There is a crossroads at the western end of the main street in Praia da Luz. A building is going up near the north-east corner, on the road to Espiche. This is the village's first real high-rise, the home of the new Shopping Centre — and a genuine "cause celebre". It took almost everyone by surprise.

In the beginning, there seemed to be little cause for concern. There were already a few multi-story apartment blocks nearby. But as construction progressed, the building grew unexpectedly tall. And then even taller.

Few people really knew what the architect's plans called for. Some actually believed that additional stories were somehow being tacked on as an afterthought.

Soon rumours began to circulate of the imminent construction of a second, similar, high-rise. The original building — "high-rise. The original building — "that building" — thus became suspect, not only in and of itself, but as the forerunner of things to come.

What is "that building"? Who or what is going to occupy all of that space?

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