

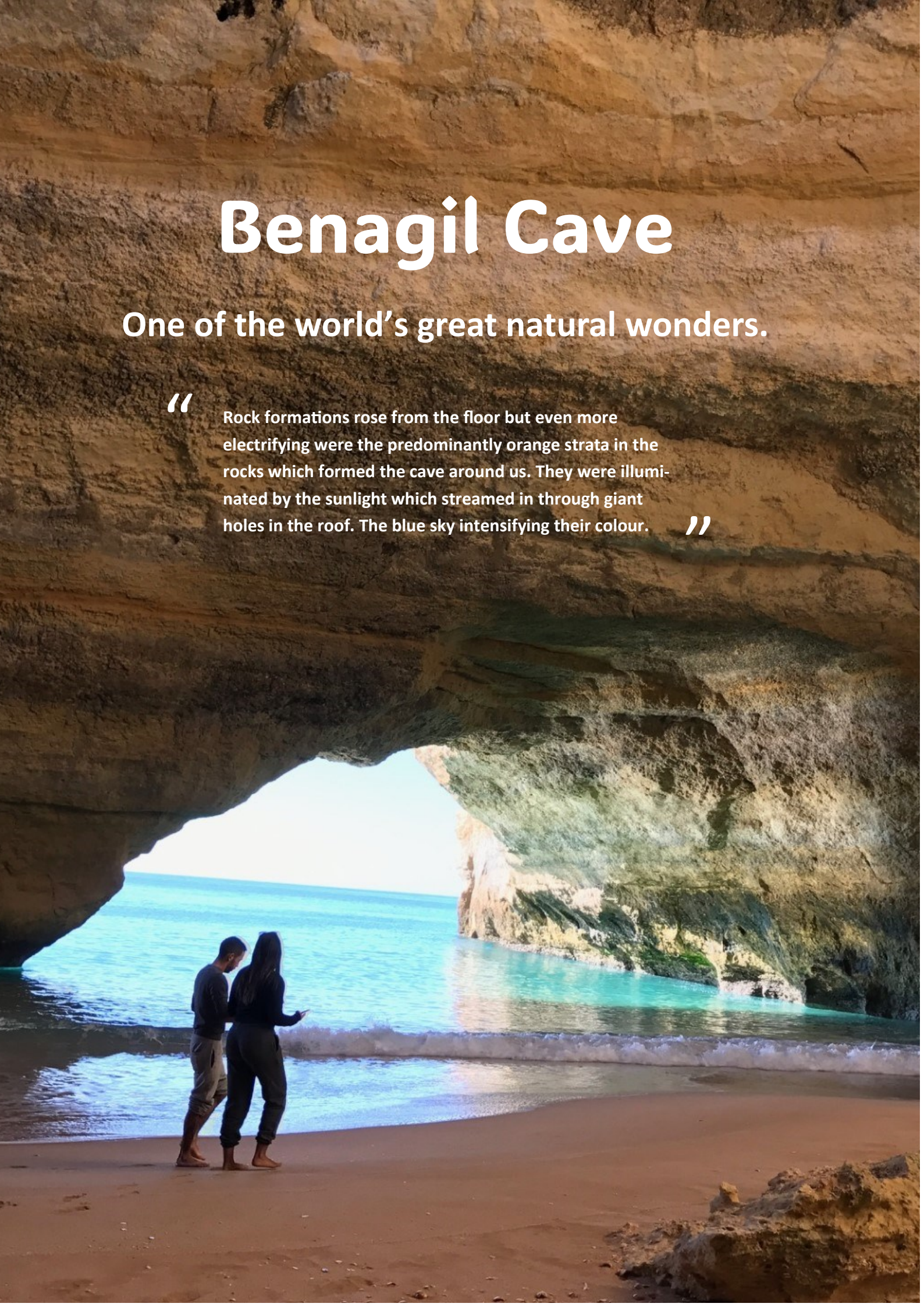
Benagil Cave

One of the world's great natural wonders.

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A MUST DO ON ANY TRIP TO THE ALGARVE IF THE WEATHER PERMITS

Benagil Cave

One of the world's great natural wonders.



Standing on the beach of Benagil cave was certainly awesome. It was the highlight of our short trip to Portugal. The water lapped onto the sandy beach and echoed as it crashed and wooshed up its walls. Wet shells glistened around us and our bare feet left new foot prints in the damp deep sand. Rock formations rose from the floor but even more electrifying were the predominantly orange strata in the rocks which formed the cave around us. They were illuminated by the sunlight which streamed in through giant holes in the roof. The blue sky intensifying their colour. No wonder it is considered one of the worlds great natural wonders.



It is a phenomena that can only be reached by boat and it needs a skilled boatman in a small craft to bring you here. Even so the boat had to retreat away from the beach until it was time to return and pick us up. The cave stretched way back and sloped upwards. Its size was immense. We roamed and photographed for about half an hour before the boat returned. Then as the swell was sucked towards the entrance as it ebbed and flowed we ran towards the boat and clamber on board.

On this calm day and at low tide it is difficult to imagine that the cave has been carved out by the action of the sea. At times the powerful waves fill the entire space and its crashing swell has carved out the openings which we saw from below.

Our encounter was the highlight of our tour, our boat having taken us exploring along a long stretch of the Algarve coast. We entered many



sea caves and encountered many coves. Some caves were large, some small and some deep. Once inside they often became dark. As we entered one we felt like Pinocchio must have felt when he was swallowed by a giant whale. Looking back the entrance resembled an open mouth with an endless narrowing gullet stretching ahead. Overhead the roof resembled the creature's ribs.

We also marvelled at the stacks which rose out of the water and enjoyed passing beneath rock arches. There were many beautiful sandy coves, many of them only accessible by boat. There were shoals of fish in the clear water and giant jellyfish. We encountered a few people high on the rocks above. One was even fishing! The length of his line being so long that it seemed impossible that he would be able to cast it successfully. He would certainly need super human strength if he caught anything bigger than a fish which would fit onto a small plate. Any attempt at a fight for anything bigger would send him tumbling into the water below.

With such a dangerous coastline for fishermen it is not surprising that we passed a lighthouse which for us created a picturesque scene but for them was often a life saver.

At one point we headed out to sea to appreciate the shoreline from a distance. As the boat sped out towards the ocean it created waves topped with white crests which sprayed us with droplets. Not an welcomed encounter as the sun was hot and unrelenting.

Soon the boat returned to the beach we had left and it ran with speed over the shallows and came to a stop in a few inches of water. The end to a great trip and an unforgettable time in Benagil Cave



Words: Janet Myers

Images: Jonathan Myers