

EXPLORE!



BEST SELLER

Azores Island Hopping

14 days

Azores, Portugal - Trip code AZ

Azores Island Hopping

Bathed in the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, these nine volcanic islands rise up from the mid-Atlantic ridge. On a series of easy walks explore five of these lush unspoilt islands: Sao Miguel, Terceira, Sao Jorge, Pico and Faial.

Discover crater lakes, extinct volcanoes, thermal springs, deep gorges and craggy coastlines. There are also opportunities to take boat trips in search of whales and dolphins. Spend time in picturesque fishing villages and the UNESCO town of Angra do Heroismo.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Sete Cidades** - Crater walk to Vista do Rei for stunning lake views
- ★ **Furnas Valley** - Thermal springs, natural ovens and bubbling mud pools
- ★ **Angra do Heroismo** - Lovely UNESCO World Heritage Site, a town with a colourful history
- ★ **Sao Jorge** - Walks through an unusual and varied landscape of cliffs, valleys and gorges
- ★ **Pico** - Coastal walk to the small whaling village of Lajes with the opportunity to go whale watching

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour at Ponta Delgada, on the island of Sao Miguel

Arrive Ponta Delgada and check-in at hotel. Located on the harbour of Sao Miguel, the Azores largest island, Ponta Delgada is a charming historic city with narrow cobbled streets and some interesting buildings worth a visit, such as the Municipal city hall with its reflecting pool in the city centre of Baixa.



Accommodation: Residencial Sete Cidades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walk around Sete Cidades, see the colourful crater lakes

Basing ourselves at Ponta Delgada, the island's capital, we spend our first 3 days exploring Sao Miguel - the largest of the islands we visit. We use a mixture of local and private buses to transfer us to and from our walks. For our first day walking we drive to Sete Cidades. From here we walk within and around some of the crater to Vista do Rei to view the splendid blue and green lakes before returning to Ponta Delgada by bus later that afternoon. Today's 8km walk is expected to take around 2.5hrs total descent of 270m.



Accommodation: Residencial Sete Cidades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Enjoy lakeside walk and lunch amongst volcanic scenery

Our second days walking begins by driving to the north side of the island. We make a stop at Gorreana, Europe's oldest and only remaining tea factory and continue to Lagoa das Furnas. Here we take a short walk of approximately forty-five minutes on the shores of the lake, stopping to see the natural ovens (cavities in the rock). Here in the huge hollow of Furnas Valley, diverse volcanic activity has also created thermal springs and boiling mud pools. Today we have an included lunch - a traditional Cozido cooked in the volcanic fumeroles. We also have time to visit the botanical gardens of Terra Nostra, planted over 200 years ago, with an outdoor thermal pool where we can bathe (optional). Back on the bus we continue to a viewpoint to Lagoa de Fogo, the islands highest crater lake, where we will stop to take photos before continuing back to Ponta Delgada.



Accommodation: Residencial Sete Cidades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Free day; optional boat trip to look for whales

Today is left free to explore more of the island on and off shore. You may wish to do one of the many walks around the island however another option is to take a whale searching trip or to swim with the dolphins.



Accommodation: Residencial Sete Cidades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Fly to Terceira Island, explore Angra do Heroismo town

An inter-island flight brings us to the island of Terceira. During our stay here, our base will be the small harbour settlement of Praia da Vitoria. After transferring to our hotel, we cross the island by local transport to the largest settlement on Terceira, the old town of Angra do Heroismo. An afternoon here gives us time to explore the town, with its distinctive architecture, its cathedrals and churches. Angra was the first settlement in the Azores to receive city status, in 1534, and remains one of the finest examples of Renaissance town planning. It was the Azores seat of government until the early 19th century and its palaces and churches are the legacy of it's supremacy. A walk up to the fort gives good views over the harbour and the narrow streets of the old town are well worth exploring at your own pace. Other options this afternoon include walking the circular trail to Monte Brasil (visible from the town) or to visit the Algar do Carvao caves, the only volcanic pit you can visit in the world, before returning to Praia.



Accommodation: Hotel Teresinha (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Coastal walk to Biscoitos

Using local transport, we head for the northern regions of the island, which we will explore on foot. From Quatro Ribeiras an easy walk follows the contours of the coast with marvellous views out to sea. We arrive at Biscoitos, where there is the chance to swim in the lava rock pools. In the late afternoon we return to Praia da Vitoria by local bus. Today's 12.5km walk is expected to take around 3.5hrs with a total ascent of 314m and total descent of 465m.



Accommodation: Hotel Teresinha (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Fly to Sao Jorge Island, free time to explore Velas town

There may be some free time in Praia da Vitoria, depending on the flight time, before we take the short flight to Sao Jorge. This curiously elongated island is some 56 km long, but only 8 km wide, having been created by a series of linear volcanic eruptions. The island remained almost isolated for many centuries, due to the lack of shelter offered to ships. After transferring to our hotel, we are free to wander the streets of the small maritime community of Velas, where we are based. Alternatively we can take an optional walk to the old whale watching tower which is positioned on a volcanic crater from where we can enjoy views down on to Velas town (2hrs).



Accommodation: Hotel Sao Jorge Garden (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Walk through Caldeira de Cima gorge down to the coast

We can spend two full days walking on Sao Jorge, a place of precipitous cliffs, narrow valleys and tiny coves. On our first day, using local taxis we'll head from Velas to the north side of the island. A stunning walk starting from the 700m high ridge of Sao Jorge leads us through the beautiful gorge of the Caldeira de Cima and down to the coast. From here we follow the rocky coastline and walk to Faja dos Cubres. Fajas are the small plains at the foot of the steep coastal cliffs which are dotted with traditional hamlets and fertile orchards. Today's 12km walk is expected to take around 4hrs with total descent of 595m.



Accommodation: Hotel Sao Jorge Garden (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Free day; choice of optional walks

Our second day is left free for optional walks, and your tour leader will advise on the various possibilities. Views of the surrounding islands are excellent from Pico da Esperanca ridge walk (1053m) in the centre of the island, while a walk along the fajas on the south coast of the island offers a contrast in scenery from the north.



Accommodation: Hotel Sao Jorge Garden (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Ferry to Pico Island, free time to explore local area

This morning we take a boat to Pico and transfer to our accommodation at Madalena. The rest of the day is free to explore this small fishing port, or perhaps take a walk through the coastal vineyards or visit the Grota do Torres Lava Tunnel.



Accommodation: Hotel Caravelas (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 11 - Coastal walk to Lajes, optional boat trip

Pico is dominated by its volcano, Pico Alto, reaching up to 2350m. The island covers some 42 km by 16 km. For those interested in the history of the island, there are many small fishing ports, several with reminders of the old whaling industry once so vital to the island. Today's walk is along the south coast of Pico. We walk to the village of Lajes, which has a small whaling museum. There is the opportunity to take a whale-watching trip (optional) from Lajes to spot sperm whales as well as several species of dolphins. Today's 6.5km walk is expected to take around 2hrs with a total descent of 450m.



Accommodation: Hotel Caravelas (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 12 - Free morning for optional walks, take the ferry to Faial Island


The morning is free to do another walk or for an ascent of Pico, a very strenuous 6-7 hour climb. Those interested in walking can take taxis part way up Pico Alto, from where there are fine views across the straits to Faial, while behind the peak of the volcano rises into the clouds. There are dozens of small volcanic cones on the slopes of Pico Alto and some caves created by past lava flows to explore for example, Furnas Frei Mateus (optional, approx 3 hours walk with 1020m ascent and descent). There are magnificent and unforgettable vistas of neighbouring islands. In the afternoon, we cross by boat to the charming island of Faial, where the harbour is often full of yachts, half way through their transatlantic crossing.



Accommodation: Azoris Faial Garden (or similar)

 Premium Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 13 - Free day; optional tour of island or boat trip


Today is free to explore the Ilha Azul. You could take the opportunity to do some more walking (optional), alternatively take a taxi tour of the island (optional). We can head for the stunning Caldeira often shrouded in cloud, where we view the lush green-carpeted crater. The views over the island are particularly impressive in summer, when the wild blue hydrangeas that form many of the hedges are in flower. We then continue to the western end of the island to visit the Capelinhos volcano, now extinct, here there are some walking trails which we could take and then go for a swim off the volcanic sandy beaches at Porto Pim. Later we return to Horta, an attractive little town with some good restaurants.



Accommodation: Azoris Faial Garden (or similar)

 Premium Hotel

 Swimming pool available

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends in Horta, Faial Island

Tour ends after breakfast.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES



Walking grade

Easy to moderate

Trek details

This is a flexible trip with included walks on 4 days. Walks are between 2 to 4 hours and the terrain is generally undulating along well-defined paths with a longer and steeper descent on day two. There are also additional optional walks including climbing Pico Alto, the Azores' highest mountain (2,350m).

Max walking altitude (m)

2350

 Optional Walks



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Ferry
Flight
Public Bus
Taxi



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)



Accommodation

11 nights standard hotel
2 nights premium hotel

Trip information

Country information

Azores

Portugal

Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a trip to Portugal - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The northern high plains has both extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. The islands have very different weather patterns due to their positioning and can have sudden rain falls throughout the year so waterproofs are recommended even in the summer.

Time difference to GMT

0

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Portuguese

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are

correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Sao Miguel - Half day whale watch €55pp

Terceira - Algar do Cárvaio Caves €6pp and shared taxi €15pp; Tourada Festival shared taxi €10-15pp

Sao Jorge - Rosais shared taxi €10pp; Ridge Walk Pico de Esperanza €15pp shared taxi; Coastal walk and dinner shared taxi €10pp (plus dinner)

Pico - UNESCO vineyards with wine and cheese plus lava caves €20pp; Whale-watching boat trip €65pp (July and August) €54pp (mid season), €49pp (low season) (subject to weather conditions); Dolphin Experience boat trip with swimming €75pp (subject to weather conditions); Furnas da Frei Matias walk (shared taxi) €8pp; Pico ascent including guide and taxi (based on 4 people: €55pp, 3 people: €73.50pp, 2 people €110pp)

Faial - Half day island excursion €20-25pp shared taxi, with Capelinhos Exhibit €10pp; Capelinhos walk shared taxi €20pp; Capelinhos Exhibit €10pp.

All taxi costs are based on a minimum of 4 people sharing.

Please note that the Tourada Festival is dependent on the local farmers schedules.

Clothing

July and August are the warmest months, though the islands are freshened by cooling sea breezes. Waterproofs are essential, as is a fleece, gloves and a hat if climbing Pico.

Footwear

Walking boots with ankle support are essential and bring comfortable trainers or sandals for relaxing. Plastic sandals are useful if swimming off laval rocks. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack. You will need to carry what you need for the day which may include a raincoat, jumper, camera, sun-cream, picnic lunch etc. On hot days you will carry fewer clothes but more drinking water.

Equipment

We recommend a waterbottle, sunhat, towel, sunscreen, repellent and sunglasses. A torch and/or head torch is required if taking the Pico climb and visiting caves. You may find walking poles useful. If you would like to snorkel, please bring your own equipment.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow approximately €10 for tipping.

Country Information

Azores

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Foreign Exchange

Portugal

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£15

Beer price

£2.00 - 3.00 depending on your location, well touristed areas are usually slightly more expensive.

Water price

£1.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Cash-point machines are available in all major towns. Bankcards with the Cirrus logo are accepted.

Credit Card Acceptance

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can be exchanged in all major towns but are not recommended due to the high rate of commission.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Ferry, Flight, Public Bus, Taxi

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Accommodation and service levels in the Azores are generally very good. We try to use smaller family-ran hotels that might not offer the same luxuries as larger chain-style hotels, but they do provide a warm welcome, a comfortable place to stay and the chance to gain a better understanding of local life.

The accommodation at Residencial Sete Cidades in Ponta Delgada at the beginning of the trip is well located within easy walking distance of the town centre. The hotel is 1970s in style and décor which is quite simple but clean and comfortable. There is a new larger breakfast and lounge area. Please note that as the street is quite narrow, if the group is travelling in a larger bus you will have to walk a short distance with your luggage from the main street to the hotel entrance.

For the 2019 departures we have changed the accommodation in Horta on Faial Island at the end of the trip, you will now stay at the premium graded Azoris Faial Garden Hotel. Set in extensive gardens with coastal views this hotel has a lounge, bar, restaurant, indoor and outdoor pools and health club with comfortable and spacious rooms. The hotel is very well located in the centre of

Horta with easy access to many great restaurants, the marina and beach.

Food and drink

Please ensure that we are fully aware of any dietary requirements in order for us to best accommodate and advise. If you have a gluten free diet it may be advised to bring some snacks with you. These are small islands with only one supermarket in close proximity and it is not always possible to find gluten free bread in each location.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Portugal: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. The Azores: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Maximum altitude (m)

2350

Azores

Portugal

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
