

# The Azores - A Brief Guide

## Individual Island and Hotel Information



### **Geography**

Located right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and North America, the Azores is on a parallel with Lisbon at latitudes of 39 43'/36 55' N.

The nine islands have a total surface area of 2,333 km<sup>2</sup> and an Exclusive Economic Zone extending over 984,300 km<sup>2</sup>

Island areas range between 747 km<sup>2</sup> (Sao Miguel island) and 17 km<sup>2</sup> (Corvo island).

The peak of the volcano of Pico attains a height of 2,351 m constituting the highest point to be found on either the Azores or mainland Portugal. The population stands at 237,795 inhabitants.

### **History**

Historically, the Portuguese came onto the scene in 1427 with the discovery of the islands of Santa Maria and São Miguel. Due to its strategic geographic position, the archipelago was to become one of the axes of navigation between Europe, the Orient and America during the course of the 16th and 17th centuries. This period saw the occurrence of major naval battles off the Azores when the islands were set upon by pirates. Subsequent centuries saw the development of the islands, the introduction of new agriculture, and the development of cattle breeding and fishing. Having constituted an integral part of Portugal from the very outset, today the Azores is an autonomous region endowed with its own parliament and government.

### **Nature and environment**

The Azores' commitment to the preservation of nature and environmental protection led the European Union to award the Azores an honorable mention in 1995 as part of the European Awards for Tourism and the Environment. The region's concern for this area is borne out by the presence of dozens of natural reserves, areas of protected landscape, parks and forests on the nine islands, a fitting testament to the commitment the regional government shows towards their ecological preservation.

**Flora**

Over 55 native vascular plants transform the Azores into a fascinating botanical Garden for plant lovers. Cedar trees, heather, ling, mountain grapes, white wood, ginger, dogwood and the "tamujo" bush, to name but a few of the local species. Then there are the new additions accumulated over the centuries such as the Japanese "criptomera" and the acacia tree both used in the manufacture of wooden products; the flowering hydrangea and azaleas; camellia, incense and many other ornamental plants

**Fauna**

Without a shadow of a doubt, the birds are the most attractive fauna of the region, in particular the priolo, a native species, the hawk, blackbird, "cagarro", wood-pigeon and common and red garajau. The sea off the Azores is home to hundreds of species of fish and shellfish as well as imposing mammals such as sperm whales, making it a truly living aquarium for those who enjoy underwater diving.

**Cultural heritage**

The islands' churches provide the only remaining traces of the settlement period. The 15th to the 18th centuries saw intense building work on the islands resulting in interesting examples of civil and religious art, especially baroque. Baroque takes on a character all of its very own on the islands in view of the limited material available locally and the distance separating the islands from mainland European cultural centers. As the first Atlantic city built according to 16th century town planning standards and endowed with worthy reminders of its cultural heritage in the form of its churches, palaces and fortress, Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira island) was awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO. The art and ethnographic museums and the popular architecture of each islands give credence to the cultural heritage of the region and allow us to delve deeper into the history and life of Azoreans over the centuries.

**Landscape** The nine islands of the Azores are each endowed with their own special landscapes and charm. Each is enveloped in shades of fertile green, flowers, phenomenal volcanoes, marvelous lakes located at the bottom of craters and other mysterious caves and caverns. Pico has its very own majestic mountain which is a sight to behold. Visiting the Azores means entering a world where nature's luxuriant beauty is on show and the presence of man becomes a distant memory as you are swept away to a primordial universe.

**Congresses and incentives**

The Islands of São Miguel, Terceira, Faial and Pico boast first class hotels endowed with facilities capable of holding congresses and other events in a most memorable and unique setting.

**Sporting holidays**

Golf, tennis, hikes, all terrain bicycling, mountain climbing, parasailing and horse riding combine to make the Azores the ideal location for those looking to enjoy a more sporting holiday. The Azores and the sea are inseparable, and this is particularly true when it comes to sports. Yachts from all around the world dock in the ports of Horta, Ponta Delgada and Praia da Vitoria to visit the other islands or to cross the Atlantic. Deep sea fishing where a number of world records have been set diving, surfing, wind surfing, and sailing are also to be found on these islands.

## Local Festivals

The Azoreans are a deeply religious people and this finds no better expression than at their festivals, which carry on the traditions of pious devotion. The Festivals of Espírito Santo, rooted in medieval traditions, are common to all the islands (May and September) and offer up an opportunity to fraternize with the locals. The Festivals of Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres in Ponta Delgada (São Miguel); the Festivals of Sanjoaninas in Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira island); the Semana do Mar in Horta (Faial island); the festival of the whalers on the islands of Pico and Mare in August on Santa Maria island; and the merry carnival of the island of Graciosa constitute the high points of the festival calendar which lasts all year round.

## Gastronomy

The many traditional recipes of Azorean cuisine are a culinary delight for the gastronome, particularly those with a penchant for sumptuous, fresh fish who will find their own personal heaven in the Azores. For dessert, there are a wide variety of puddings as well as excellent cheeses (the prime example coming from the island of São Jorge), sweet and juicy pineapples, the tropical passion fruit and herb tea grown on the island of São Miguel, White and red wines, brandy from the island of Craciosa, verdelho from the island of Pico and Biscoitos (Terceira island) are all a "must for those making a gastronomic tour of the Azores.

## Some local dishes

"Cozido à Portuguesa" - pork, beef, local sausages, potatoes, cabbage, etc. stewed together.

"Alcatra" - roasted meat (beef) with potatoes, wine and spices in a clay pot..

"Caldo Verde" - cream of potato soup with sausage and shredded cabbage

"Sardinha Assada" - fresh sardines grilled over charcoal

"Caldeirada de Peixe" - fish, shellfish, potatoes, tomatoes and onions stewed together

"Bacalhau" - salted cod steak with onions, potatoes and parsley

"Coelho Assado" - roasted rabbit with onions, white wine and spices

"Frango no Churrasco Piri-Piri" - grilled chicken in a hot spicy sauce

"Salão e Queijo Fresco" - white and creamy fresh cheese

"Pudim Molotov" - a rich cocktail of meringue and caramel

"Arroz Doce" - rice pudding with cinnamon and cream

"Uma bica" - small black coffee (expresso coffee).

"Um garoto" - small white coffee

## To help you order:

I'd like a/an/some *Queria*

Waiter!/Waitress! *Faz Favor!*

beer *uma cerveja*

mineral water *agua mineral*

bill *a conta*

napkin *um guardanapo*

bread *pão*

pepper *pimenta*

butter *manteiga*

potatoes *batatas*

coffee um *café*

rice *arroz*

dessert *uma sobremesa*

salad *uma salada*

fish *peixe*

salt *sal*

fruit *fruta*

sandwich *uma sanduiche*  
ice-cream *um gelado*  
soup *uma sopa*  
meat *carne*  
sugar *açucar*  
menu *a ementa*  
tea *chá*  
milk *leite*  
wine *vinho*

### **Wines**

*Vinho Branco* White wine  
*Vinho da casa* House wine  
*Vinho clarete* Light red wine  
*Vinho doce* Sweet wine  
*Vinho espumante* Sparkling wine  
*Vinho do Porto* Port wine  
*Vinho da região (Vinho de cheiro)* Local wine (São Miguel)  
*Vinho seco* Dry wine  
*Vinho verde* "Green" wine\* \*(semi-sparkling acidic wine)

### **Handicraft**

Using local materials, the Azorean artisans keep alive century old traditions. From coloured ceramics to delicate embroidery and lace, from works made of whalebone and teeth to the exquisite floral arrangements crafted out of fish scales, to pieces made from the pith of fig trees and hydrangea. And let us not forget the miniatures of elegant whale boats and every day traditional objects, the guitars which lend life to a land that loves its festivals and works crafted from black basalt.

### **Tourist facilities**

Comfortable hotel installations accommodate tourists on all the islands, with the exception of Corvo which has only one bed and breakfast. On the islands of Faial, São Miguel and Terceira tourist facilities are to be found in a rural setting, affording high quality accommodation in homely surroundings.

### **Air transportation**

There are frequent two hour flights from Lisbon to the three Azorean airports: Ponta Delgada (São Miguel island), Lajes (Terceira island), and Horta (Faial island). Ponta Delgada is also served by regular flights to Funchal (Madeira), Oporto, Frankfurt (Germany), etc. Charter flights link U.S.A. and Canada to the airports of Ponta Delgada and Lajes. Inter island flights are assured by SATA Air Açores.

### **Sea transportation**

There are regular sea connections between the islands of Faial, Pico and São Jorge and also between Terceira and Graciosa. Ground transportation. All the islands barring Corvo are provided with bus and taxi transportation. Hire car services are available on the eight main islands. Car transportation is provided for tourist trips around the island of Corvo.

### **Clothing**

Whatever the time of year, lightweight clothing with one or two woollens for those cool evenings are all you'll need. Raincoats are recommended from October to April when rainfall is more frequent though a sunny spell is always just around the corner.

## LANGUAGE

Portuguese ranks the fifth most spoken language in the world, being spoken as far afield as Brazil. Some would be led to believe that due to the close proximity to Spain a great deal of similarity in the language would exist. This is not strictly true and although most Portuguese do understand Spanish they will not reply in the language. Knowledge of Spanish will help you in understanding signs and menus but as Portugal has an association with Britain dating back hundreds of years, English is widely spoken.

## SOME USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

Do you speak English? *Fala Inglês?*

I don't understand *Não compreendo*

yes *sim*

no *não*

good morning *bom dia*

good afternoon *boa tarde*

goodnight *boa noite*

goodbye *adeus*

please *faz favor*

thank you *obrigado* (masculine) thank you *obrigada* (feminine)

yesterday *ontem*

today *hoje*

tomorrow *amanhã*

day *dia*

week *semana*

month *mês*

year *ano*

left *esquerdo*

right *direito*

good *bom*

bad *mau*

big *grande*

small *pequeno*

cheap *barato*

expensive *caro*

hot *quente*

cold *frio*

old *velho*

new *novos*

open *aberto*

closed *fechado*

bank *banco*

post office *correio*

post cards *postais*

stamps *selos*

doctor *médico*

chemist *farmacia*

How much is that? *Quanto custa isto?*

## NUMBERS

0 *zero*

1 *um/uma*

2 *dois/duas*

3 *três*

30 *trinta*

40 *quarenta*

50 *cinquenta*

60 *sessenta*

4 <i>quatro</i>	70 <i>setenta</i>
5 <i>cinco</i>	80 <i>oitenta</i>
6 <i>seis</i>	90 <i>noventa</i>
7 <i>sete</i>	100 <i>cem</i>
8 <i>oito</i>	200 <i>duzentos</i>
9 <i>nove</i>	300 <i>trezentos</i>
10 <i>dez</i>	400 <i>quatrocentos</i>
11 <i>onze</i>	500 <i>quinhentos</i>
12 <i>doze</i>	600 <i>seiscentos</i>
13 <i>treze</i>	700 <i>setecentos</i>
14 <i>catorze</i>	800 <i>oitocentos</i>
15 <i>quinze</i>	900 <i>novacentos</i>
16 <i>dezasseis</i>	1000 <i>mil</i>
17 <i>dezassete</i>	
18 <i>dezoito</i>	
19 <i>dezanove</i>	
20 <i>vinte</i>	