

DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA)

Flight departure from the city of origin to São Miguel and rental car pick-up. Now you're in the capital of the Azores! The first thing you should do before going to pick up your car is take off your watch and get ready to experience an unforgettable holiday. The Azores archipelago is made up of 9 islands and São Miguel is the largest, as well as home to the capital city. Getting around by rental car is the best option because of its compact size: 65 kilometres long and between 8 and 16 kilometres wide. We'll start off by exploring Ponta Delgada, the most important city on the island. Founded in the fifteenth century, a quick stroll around will reveal the Brazilian influence on its buildings. The main attractions include its wide promenade, perfect for a leisurely stroll along the waterfront or a light bite at one of the many terraces. The city centre boasts two must-see gardens: the University Gardens and the José do Canto Botanic Gardens. Diving enthusiasts can head off to "El Dori", a 130-metre shipwreck off the coast of the city. It is a natural sanctuary and a must-visit for lovers of the underwater world. If diving doesn't rock your boat, then no worries, the local cuisine is well worth dipping into. As to be expected from an island, the flagship product is fish. Lots of tuna and lots of cod, the signature dish of Portugal. The real surprise, though, is the beef reared in São Miguel. Thanks to its lush green meadows, these cattle graze on the best pastures and their meat is a prized delicacy. Pineapple and cheeses are also very typical. Try out everything you can! When the sun goes down and the street lights are turned on, it's time to head over to the charming São Sebastiao Church square. This is a pedestrian zone, but don't worry because you can park your car on the seafront. If you're with your other half, take their hand and just stroll in silence around the square and the church. It's pure magic. You can have dinner in this area, which is home to some of the coolest restaurants in town. Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

DAY 2 · SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA - FETEIRAS - CANDELÁRIA - MOSTEIROS - SETE CIDADES - MIRADOR CERRADO DAS FREIRAS - LAGOA DE SANTIAGO - LAGOA DE CANARIO - PONTA DELGADA)

Today, you'll be exploring the western side of the island. Don't forget your swimming costume and beach towel, as you'll be able to take a dip in the sea... but in hot water! This amazing experience will be in Feteiras. It's a natural pool where the water gushes out hot and mixes with the cold water of the ocean. After the dip, dry off and head to Candelária, one of the most authentic villages on the island. There are no modern buildings and you'll be enthralled by the colourful façades. Some are white and others are pink, yellow or blue. It's really original. The village is surrounded by cliffs and cows grazing in the fields. You will love it. Then it's back on the road to Mosteiros. As the island is so small, you can do lots of visits in one day. In fact, today's route covers sixty-six kilometres in total and would only take ninety minutes without stops. In Mosteiros, you can also take a dip in natural pools. But if you're more of a beach person, then there's one waiting for you here. It's volcanic with black sand and commands outstanding views over the horizon. Just off the coast are the Mosteiros Islands, a group of quirkily-shaped islets that could well be the shelter of Jack Sparrow's "Black Pearl" and his henchmen. Once you've brushed off the volcanic sands from your toes, head back to the car for the second half of today's trip. And we've kept the best to last! Sete Cidades is your next destination. The village is very welcoming, especially the Church of São Nicolau. Onward to an incredible crater that is home to four lakes, two of which are only separated by a bridge. One is green and the other is blue. It's truly amazing. This phenomenon can only be seen in the Azores, so make sure you enjoy it and take lots of photos to show your friends. It can be seen perfectly from the Cerrado das Freiras vantage point. All we can say is one thing: there's no way you'll want to be anywhere else in the world right now. When you come round from your nature-induced trance, head over to the Lagoa de Santiago lake. It's also sublime. The lake is inside a crater and looks as though it comes straight out of the series "Lost". Go and see for yourself! Last but not least, the final stop is at the Lagoa de Canario. It's nice to stretch your legs and take a stroll along its forest-lined shores. Then it's time to drive back to Ponta Delgada and enjoy a pre-dinner walk along the seafront. Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

● DAY 3 · SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA - CAPELAS - SÃO VICENTE FERREIRA - RIBEIRA GRANDE - SALTO DO FARINHA - FARO PONTA DO ARNEL - CALDEIRA VELHA - PONTA DELGADA)

There's a big day ahead today, so have a hearty breakfast and then get straight out onto the road. Head north on the EN4-1A and in 10 minutes you'll be in Capelas. The natural pools here are the greatest attraction. The Atlantic isn't so benevolent on this side of the island and the inhabitants of Capelas have managed to create a formula that respects the environment and lets them cool off on hot days. It's really weird to be bathing in the calm waters of the natural pool while the waves are breaking on the rocks just a few metres away from you. After a refreshing dip, it's time to head for São Vicente Ferreira. This is a small and very laid-back village, but gives access to one of the island's greatest natural wonders: its cliffs. They stretch up to Ribeira Grande, so don't worry about stopping at the very first viewpoint. Choose one, two or however many you want, and take in the vistas. In fact, if you get there before dawn you'll witness one of the best sunrises in the world. You'll pass by Fenais da Luz, Calhetas and Rabo de Peixe, and after this amazing cliff-top drive you'll eventually reach Ribeira Grande, the second largest town on the island. A must-see is the Ponte dos Oito Arcos bridge. Make sure you take the signposted path to one side and view the bridge from a different perspective. It's also worth taking a stroll through the town centre and the area around the bell tower. Then head towards the northeast of the island until reaching Salto do Farinha. This is a monumental waterfall, around 40 metres in height, that has a considerable water flow in winter. If you're travelling at another time of the year, it's better to ask in Salga - the nearest village - before heading out there. The picnic area and the vantage point are also very pleasant. The next stop is the easternmost point of the island: the Farol Ponta do Arnel. This was the first lighthouse to be built in the Azores. (Note: The road down to the lighthouse is quite arduous. If the uneven terrain seems too much, you can always cover the journey on foot. Awaiting you is an operational lighthouse and endless views). As the island is pocket-sized, it's easy to visit many interesting sights without spending too much time on the road. We recommend taking the same route back and when you get to Ribeira Grande, turn off towards Caldeira Velha, a stunning nature park full of vegetation, streams and the odd waterfall. Don't miss the thermal waterfall that crashes into a sapphire blue lake! The incredible thing is that the water is hot, so swimming is possible in any season. If you still have time and the energy, a good option is to visit Lagoa do Fogo. This is an excursion that can easily be done in under two hours. The prize at the end is the crater of the so-called Volcano of Fire, turned into a lagoon thanks to the abundant rainfall at this location. It's one of the most stunning natural landscapes that can be seen in the whole world, so it's well worth taking a trip there. Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

● DAY 4 · SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA - LAGOA DO FOGO O WHALE WATCHING TRIP. OPCIONAL)

The coast of São Miguel is well worth visiting, so we recommend discovering its beaches or at least spending the morning today on a sightseeing boat. Take the chance to sail a little bit of the Atlantic. And if you're travelling with children, don't forget the whale watching trips, one of the highlights of this island. They'll love it! (Note: Tour not included). It's highly recommended, especially as you can spot whales, sharks, dolphins and turtles.

You can choose between half-day and full-day trips. Take your pick! That said, check beforehand because some are only available in the summer, while others take place all year round.

Others have an extended version that includes a visit to Vila Franca Island.

If you're more into adventure sports, though, São Miguel has something for all tastes. The many alternatives include canoeing, climbing, canyoning and horseback riding. These activities will reveal another side of the island. If you wish, you can use the day to take a longer excursion out to Lagoa do Fogo and its surroundings.

Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

● DAY 5 · SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA - FURNAS - LAGOA DAS FURNAS - MIRADOR DO SALTO DO CAVALO - SALTO DO PREGO POVOAÇÃO - PONTA DELGADA)

Get ready today to drive one of the longest stretches on the whole tour. It will take you to the area of Furnas and Povoação, on the east of the island. To save a bit of time, head to Lagoa das Furnas on the northern motorway (the one that goes through Ribeira Grande). You'll go back on the southern one. Before that, Lagoa das Furnas. It's legendary. But it's not the only attraction in the area. Furnas is also famous for its hot springs. Don't get into one with no people in it. It might be because the water is steaming hot and you'll get a shock. Trust the locals, as they're the experts. And they are so because a popular pastime is to use these waters to cook one of the most famous dishes of Azorean cuisine: the 'cozido' stew. It's cooked in iron pots and includes pork, cabbage, chicken, sausage, bacon, turnips, carrots and lots of potatoes. It's simply exquisite and definitely worth a try. A great place to observe the lagoon and the surroundings is from the Salto do Cavalo vantage point. If there's some mist around, you'll be able to enjoy one of the very best views on the whole island. The next stop is Povoação, in the southeast of São Miguel. Before going into the village, take a hike out to Salto do Prego. It's not the most famous waterfall in São Miguel, but it may well be the best. It takes around 45 minutes each way, but the trail is gentle, well signposted and definitely worth it. You can have a refreshing dip as a reward. Povoação has many other rewards like this, so don't worry if you decide not to hike out to the falls. One of them is to stroll around the port and have an ice cream at the sports centre bar. It's the only one around, so you can leave your car in the car park and walk along the seafront and the surrounding streets. It is time to head back towards Ponta Delgada. Stop at one of the top attractions of São Miguel: the island of Vila Franca. It's an ancient marine crater that is permanently flooded and features a nearly perfect circular outline. The surrounding landscape and the calm waters make this islet an authentic jewel in the crown. Then it's time to return to Ponta Delgada. Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

● DAY 6 · SÃO MIGUEL (PONTA DELGADA - ILHÉU DE VILA FRANCA. OPCIONAL)

Your holiday is coming to an end, so what better way to spend the day than admiring the island's beautiful coastline? Lay down your towel and enjoy the sun and water-based activities on the beaches of Santa Barbara, Vinha da Areia, Amora, Dos Moinhos and, of course, the fabulous island of Vila Franca. However, the scheduled boat service only operates between the months of June to September. If your trip coincides with these dates, then you're in luck. Take your underwater camera and snorkelling gear for a fantastic dive through an aquatic paradise. Overnight stay in Ponta Delgada.

● DAY 7 · SÃO MIGUEL - CITY OF ORIGIN

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

Your trip includes

Your trip includes

- ✓ Return flight.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Ponta Delgada.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Ponta Delgada.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.

Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Possible toll charges.
- ✗ Insolvency protection.
- ✗ Whale watching boat trip.
- ✗ Boat to the island of Vila Franca.

Destinations Visited

Ponta Delgada



Candelária



Mosteiros



Sete Cidades



Ribeira Grande



Capelas



Povoação



Furnas



Important remarks

- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far the possible.
- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.
- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.
- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.
- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.
- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.
- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.