

Walking, Whales & Flowers in the Azores

<http://www.kudutravel.com/tours/azores-walking-tour>

19 – 27 May 2020

The islands of the Azores, set far out in the Atlantic Ocean, enjoy a peaceful, slow-paced way of life that guarantees a relaxing holiday for visitors interested in exploring one of Europe's quieter corners. We walk on two different islands, each with spectacular views and fascinating flora and geology. In addition to enjoying two whale and dolphin watching trips (Azorean waters are renowned as a cetacean hotspot), we visit botanical gardens and interesting small museums, walk in the volcanic landscapes and taste excellent local wines and seafood. We are based in two very comfortable hotels, a 4-star historic Pousada and a well-appointed rural lodge with a pool and an excellent restaurant.

HIGHLIGHTS of our Azores walking tour include:

- Walks on 'new land' formed by volcanic eruptions; through small vineyards; and high in the hills, with wonderful views
- Boat trips guided by expert marine biologists, in search of sperm whales, Cuvier's beaked whale and Atlantic, Bottlenose and Risso's dolphins
- Visits to Botanical gardens, Whaling Museums, a Maritime Museum and the Wine Museum in a former Carmelite convent
- Staying in 2 very comfortable hotels (a 4-star historic Pousada and a well-appointed rural lodge with a pool and an excellent restaurant) and enjoying local seafood and lamb accompanied by good Portuguese wines

Guests' comments on this trip:

'Wonderful mix of activities, all well researched and organised. The Azores surpassed my expectations.'

'Thank you again for such an enjoyable and interesting trip. We very much appreciated your enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership and Tereza's calm and efficient organisation. The islands were all so different and your research and planning found us such varied things to see in addition to the walking. The walk round the rim of the caldera on Faial was outstanding. The locals were charming and everywhere so unspoilt. The trip was our best Kudu trip so far, which is saying something as all the others have been wonderful too.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

D included

After meeting at the small airport on Faial Island in the afternoon, we have a short transfer to the colourful port of Horta, famous as the best harbour for trans-Atlantic yachts. We settle into our Pousada hotel, set within the walls of a 16th century fortress overlooking the harbour, and have time for a swim in the hotel pool before dinner in the elegant restaurant.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

A cliff-top walk reveals the nest sites of Cory's shearwaters, whose strange cries can be heard at night throughout the Azores, before a scenic drive northwest to Capelinhos, the site of a

volcanic eruption in 1957. We walk on the new land formed there, with lava formations and colonising plants, and visit an excellent interpretive centre for a fascinating insight into the history of volcanoes on the islands. After a leisurely fish lunch by the water, we have some free time to explore the yacht harbour with boats from all over the world and perhaps sample a gin and tonic in the renowned Peter's Bar.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

A local biologist guides us on a walk high in the hills in search of endemic goldcrests and canaries, before we explore the Botanical gardens in the grounds of the Quinta de São Lourenço, devoted to the indigenous plants of the archipelago. After lunch in a local tavern, we catch an afternoon ferry for the 25-minute crossing to the island of Pico, dominated by its dramatic 2,351 m peak, an extinct volcano. A brief road transfer brings us to our rural lodge, a series of stylish wooden buildings in a conserved laurisilva forest, with views of the sea and the Pico volcano.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

This morning, we walk gradually down an old cobbled trail on the north coast, via box forest and fields grazed by sheep, cattle and goats, to the shipbuilding village of Santo Amaro, where we visit the traditional handicrafts centre. A scenic drive delivers us back to our hotel with time to relax in the grounds and swim in the freshwater pool. This evening, we dine in the nearby harbour, combining sea views and seafood.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

We drive to the south coast, pausing at a much venerated 17th century church, and visit the traditional whaler's lookout tower and the Whaler's Museum, documenting the centuries-old tradition of whaling in the archipelago, which ended in 1985. Following a light lunch, we have an introductory talk about cetacean research in the Azores and a 3-hour whale and dolphin watching trip by boat, hoping to find family groups of sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*) and Atlantic, Bottlenose and Risso's dolphins.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

A second whale watching trip increases our chances of close encounters with the large pods of cetaceans offshore. We also see flocks of Cory's shearwaters and, possibly, some leatherback turtles, Bulwer's petrels and Portuguese Man o'War jellyfish. Returning to land for lunch, we walk from a high point in the centre of the island, seeing the Azorean endemic Rothschild's buzzard soaring overhead, remnant laurisilva forest, dwarf juniper and endemic heather species and wonderful views.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Following a relaxed breakfast, we stroll amongst the lava-walled vineyards, with the opportunity to take a dip in a natural rock pool. In the Wine museum, housed in a former Carmelite convent, we taste Pico's special wines and picnic beneath an impressive grove of dragon trees. Crossing back to Faial Island by ferry, we visit the local museum, with displays devoted to the history of early flying boats and the island's role in trans-Atlantic cable transmissions, and settle back into our original Pousada hotel.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

This morning, we walk a circuit of the outer edge of the crater of Faial's central volcano, displaying extraordinary views down into the green basin. We are within the Caldeira do Faial Nature Reserve and encounter endemic plants (*Daboecia azorica*, *Thymus caespititius*) and the endemic Azorean birds, such as the chaffinch and blackcap. There is time to enjoy a swim in the hotel's outdoor pool before our farewell dinner in a well-known local restaurant.

DAY 9

B included

After a leisurely breakfast, and perhaps a stroll round the harbour, we transfer to the small island airport for our flights home.

Lisbon

Please enquire about a guided or independent visit to Lisbon before or after the tour, taking advantage of your flight change at Lisbon airport.

Activity Level

Standard

6 walking days (1.5 – 3.5 hours). Lightweight walking boots that provide good ankle support and hiking poles/sticks are advisable, as the terrain is often quite rough underfoot.

Temperatures

Influenced by the warm Gulf Stream, the Azores have a mild climate year-round, with May daily high temperatures of 18-21°C. Cloud cover can make it colder at higher altitude. Rain is always a possibility and the sea temperature is around 17°C.

Accommodation

- 2 x 2 nights on Faial, in a Pousada hotel, recently renovated to a high standard and set within the walls of a 16C fortress on the harbour
- 4 nights on Pico, in a well-appointed rural lodge with a pool and an excellent restaurant

Trip Price, per person sharing

£2,580.75 until 18th August 2019

£2,650.50 until 18th November 2019

£2,720.25 until 18th February 2020

£2,790 after 18th February 2020

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£380 double for single supplement

£500 deposit per person

Please note that the double room for single use supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share, but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for Days 1 through 9, on a twin shared basis
- Meals (with wine at lunches and dinners) as listed in the daily notation
- Land transportation in a private vehicle, as described, except during free periods
- Ferry tickets between Pico and Faial islands
- Two whale and dolphin watching trips
- Entrance, sightseeing and guiding fees, as described in the itinerary

- Gratuities for hotel and restaurant staff and drivers (appreciation for Kudu tour leader is at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Horta airport
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol other than wine with group lunches and dinners, free time activities, etc.)
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage
- Portuguese departure tax, if any

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday.

We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Visa and Health Requirements

Visitors from the UK, EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand currently require a valid passport, but not a visa, for entry to Portugal. If you are a national of any other country, please check visa regulations with your nearest Embassy of Portugal.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Portugal. You may wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (www.dh.gov.uk/travellers) and the FCO (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book a trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see our website or ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.