



AMC ADVENTURE TRAVEL

VOLUNTEER-LED EXCURSIONS WORLDWIDE

Exotic Hiking Holiday in the Azores

April 22 - May 3, 2016 (trip# 16)

Join us for this unique opportunity of exploring three islands of the Azorean Archipelago, a very special part of Portugal that for the most of the time seems to be forgotten and not yet fully discovered by tourists!

The Azores archipelago consists of 9 islands and a combined population of approximately 250,000 people living mostly in rural settlements. The region is a mid-Atlantic treasure that escapes tourism of grand proportions. On one hand, it is a throwback to old-style Portugal, the one of narrow cobbled streets and red roofed townhouses with ornate shutters and wrought iron balconies. On the other hand, it is a botanical Eden that rivals Hawaii in topography yet maintains an old world maritime culture. It is truly a land of contrasts and offers a feast of delights for the discerned, active traveler- primarily a marriage between a walking discovery over unique and somewhat unreal landscapes and a journey back in time.

White arum lilies, red cannas and spires of orange crocosmia grow wild. Hydrangeas make up roadside hedges while lines of bamboo separate fields. Then there are

agaves, cacti, succulents, fir trees, plane trees with trunks and branches covered with lichen, and azaleas bursting into bloom.

Hiking the islands is like taking a trip through an open-air botanical garden. Then there is the volcanoes and hidden lakes- trapping micro climates, lush and bursting with song birds and exotic insects. Along the coastlines, home to an abundance of whales and dolphins, maritime traditions remain unchanged and society is molded by the rigors of powerful mid Atlantic swell, making the Azores one of the cultures devoted to fishing



worldwide.

We will be visiting three of the most beautiful of the Azorean islands; Pico, Faial and Sao Miguel.

Pico Island, named for its imposing mountain, is one of the most beautiful and underrated of the island of the Azores. Second only to Sao Miguel in size, the “Mountain Island” stands majestically in the middle of the Azorean central group. Pico Island history was built on the destiny of its whale hunting and winery traditions. The famous Pico wines and the UNESCO world patrimony designated vineyards, as well as wooden boat building, are contemporary fixtures of Pico. Whale hunting, long gone, gave way to a movement of fair treatment study and observation of whales, dolphins and other sea mammals. Whale and dolphin

watching trips can be organized (as an optional activity) in Madalena. Volcanic eruptions ended 300 years ago and Pico is considered a dormant volcano, adding to the mystique of the island, and serving as a magnet for scientists.

The Pico Island landscape is a sublime mixture of lava rock and exotic vegetation in an ever changing scenery that envelopes this scarcely populated island. Pico features some of the best swimming holes in the Azores.

Faial Island, the Blue Island, is part of the Azores central group. Different colors of flue decorate the houses, divide the fields and line the roadsides, giving Faial the name of Blue Island. In the 18th century the development of the whale hunting brought the early whaling fleets to Horta, the principal port city of Faial. By the 19th century, Horta had become an important sea port, and a stopping point for a large number of yachts crossing the Atlantic. In the first half of the 20th century Faial was an important communications center as underwater cable links connected Europe to North America via Faial. The island was also a feature in the pioneer period of aviation where seaplanes, most notable Pan Am Airlines, made the island a connecting refueling port for their transatlantic voyages. The island is a photographers dream with a green circle of a volcanic cone at the top of a hill, the ochre walls of a fortress, sailboats, unforgettable sunrises, beautiful hydrangeas and quiet inlets of soft sand beaches.

Sao Miguel Island, known as the Green Island, is the largest and most populated island of the Azores. The island covers 293 square miles and has around 150,000 inhabitants, a third of which are located in Ponta Delgada, the largest city in the archipelago. Sao Miguel's diverse scenery is a pleasant awakening to visitors, with beautiful lakes, sandy beaches, rolling hills, high mountains, green plains and blue ocean. Sao Miguel is also the island in the Azores with the most to offer. Its cosmopolitan town of Ponta Delgada offers the visitor a blend of contemporary life with historic flavor. Sao Miguel monuments, turn of the century architecture, parks and cobble stone streets are interlaced with a modern marina, nice restaurants, shopping and ocean-front cafes. Sao Miguel is unlike any other destination in the world. Once you come you will want to come back! The island is composed of two volcanic massifs separated by a central ridge with a low altitude. The highest point is at Pico da Vara at 3545 feet. The large craters of Sete Cidades (seven cities), Fog (fire) and Furnas contain wonderful lakes of crystal clear water.

ITINERARY:

Day 0 - 22 April Depart from the US

Day 1 – 23 April SAO MIGUEL ISLAND (Ponta Delgado)

Arrival to *Ponta Delgada*, the Azores capital city on Sao Miguel Island (non-stop from Boston early AM).

Airport transfer and hotel check. Rooms are reserved for the night of 22 April so that you will have full access to room from the moment of your arrival on 4/23. Settle in,

take a shower or enjoy the buffet breakfast. We will have an early afternoon meeting time – leading to a walking tour of Ponta Delgado with a special focus on ethnography and Island traditions including a walk through the *Jardim (Garden) Antonio Borges* – a pleasant introduction and acclimatization to begin our discovery of the region. Hiking time 3 hours minimum / easy. Accommodation: Ponta Delgado – *HOTEL MARINA ATLANTICO 4 stars*

(<http://www.bensaude.pt/paginas/hoteis/hoteldetalhe.aspx?idLingua=2&idhotel=10>)

dinner in local restaurant near hotel.

Day 2 – 24 April SAO MIGUEL ISLAND (Sete Cidades Village & Lake Walk)

Today we hike the *Sete Cidades* lake and volcanic cone region, a rural area of natural beauty and geological wonder. This charming village area is located on the shore of a lake (Lagoa Azul) at the bottom of an extinct volcano caldeira. We hike the wonderful caldeira area taking in widespread views of the sea and Atlantic fishing villages and enjoying a vast array of botany. Walking will range from 4-6 hours total / 7 miles minimum. Transport by private bus service from Ponta Delgada. Accommodation: Ponta Delgado – Hotel Marino Atlantico / breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner in local restaurant.



Day 3 – 25 April SAO MIGUEL ISLAND (Lagoa do Forno Hike)

Today we transfer to the central highlands to the Lagoa do Forno (Lake of Fire). This scenic lake hike into the crater permits us to swim the fresh waters and picnic lakeside. This is a linear route. Following the hike, we visit the Caldeiras (hot springs), in a lush tropical canyon and take in the brilliant interpretive display on volcanism and geothermal activity before descending to Ribeira Grande for a wine tasting and easy walk around this historic North Shore village. Hiking time 4-5 hours. Transport via private bus

services from Ponta Delgado. Accommodation: Ponta Delgado – Hotel Marino Atlantico / breakfast, picnic lunch / no dinner included this evening.

Day 4 – 26 April PICO ISLAND (flight) and Madalena’s Vineyard Hike

Morning flight to Pico Island (1 hr). Private transfer to *Madalena* on Pico Island (20 min) and check-in at the hotel. Today we hike the wonderful vineyards of Madalena along stony basalt paths leading to the 17th Century Parish Church. The viniculture tradition – a Unesco World Heritage Site for its century old production of Verdelho wines on volcanic soil - is a must see. Madalena is a charming port town located at Pico’s western end. It serves as the economic and socio-cultural hub of Pico Island itself. Hiking time 4-5 hours. Accommodation: Madalena – *HOTEL CARAVELAS 4 stars* (<http://www.hotelcaravelas.com.pt>) breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner in local restaurant.

Day 5 – 27 April PICO ISLAND Hiking Lagoa do Capito and the Sea Side Grottos

Today hike the wonderful path from the nature reserve at *Lagoa Capito* - famous as a migratory area for a wide variety of bird species - down to *Cais do Pico*, a pretty hamlet area of the north shore where we’ll visit the *Lava Caves* (Gruta das Torres), and some very special *Pico* hamlets. Picnic lunch on route and throughout the day fantastic views of Pico Volcano itself – Portugal’s single highest land mass. Hiking time 4-5 hours. Accommodation: Madalena – *HOTEL CARAVELAS 4 stars* - Breakfast, lunch and dinner in local restaurant.

Day 6 – 28 April FAIAL ISLAND Hiking Visit

Morning transfer by ferry (30 min) to the Azores’s fifth largest island, *Faial* - a name derived from the local Faya tree and termed the ‘blue island’ for its bounty of hydrangeas that adorn the island in summer months. We take a private bus transfer (1 hour approx), and stop at the remarkable Capelo Volcanic complex – where your guide will lead an interpretive hike to understand how in 1957 the island of Faial grew by 2.4km square. From here we drive to the top of the island and hike the entire Caldeira (cone) of the Cabeco Gordo (1043m) before driving to the island’s lively port of *Horta*, considered the Azores’s most cosmopolitan center due to passing trade from international sailors and yachts. Early evening return ferry to Picos. Hiking time approximately 4-5 hours. Accommodation: Madalena – *HOTEL CARAVELAS 4 stars* - Breakfast, picnic lunch and dinner in local restaurant.

Day 7 – 29 April OPTION DAY: Climb Pico, go deep sea fishing or enjoy a whale & Dolphin watching program on Pico Island

Today we offer a few options to explore more of Pico Island. You can climb the imposing *Pico Volcanic Cone* (7715 feet), with your AMC and local leaders / rated challenging – but not technical). Or, for those seeking a day without hiking, there is the *Whale & Dolphin Discovery program* or even deep sea fishing from the Port of



Madalena. These seafaring options are not included in the tour price but we recommend it for those wishing to experience what the Azores is most passionate about, marine life. There are also a number of museums and an interpretive center in the region that are worth visiting. Accommodation: Madalena – *HOTEL*

CARAVELAS 4 stars – Breakfast only provided / no organized lunch or dinner included but we will advise options.

Day 8 – 30 April PICOS ISLAND to SAO MIGUEL ISLAND (Furnas Village)

(Depending on final flight arrangements) Our preferred option is a visit to the interpretive center and cave tour of the lava tubes (Gruta las Tores). This two hour program is phenomenal insight to understanding volcanism and gives visitors a chance to go underground and hike in real lava tubes. Alternative plans can be: Hiking a rural track to the local honey producers base for a tour or we can offer other hiking options – all depending on SATA airline’s final schedule. Afternoon transfer to airport and flight from Pico to Sao Miguel. Private coach transfer to **Furnas** (1 hour)

Furnas (Portuguese for cavern or crater), is one of the Azores most unique destinations. A village of approximately 1900 residents, its colorful history dates back to the 1500’s and includes pirate invasions, a once booming forest industry and of course, healing spring waters and steam vents, making this one of the Azores’s finest natural attractions. We have 3 nights here to enjoy some wonderful hikes within the archipelago’s natural phenomena and gardens. Upon arrival, check into Hotel Terra Nostra Garden and time permitting, an exploration in the immediate area on foot - visiting the botanical gardens and enjoying the hot springs (free) and hotel surroundings. Accommodation: Furnas - TERRA NOSTRA GARDEN HOTEL 4 stars [terra nostra garden hotel](#) breakfast and dinner / no group lunch

Day 9 – 1 May FURNAS AND THE LAKE WALK

Hiking to the *Furnas Lagoa* and surrounding natural area directly from hotel. Today’s hiking can be of varying distances and includes a small summit challenge (Pico de Ferro view point). Reaching the lake is a highlight as well as passing the numerous caldeiras (hot springs), where stew dishes are cooked in the earth near colonial

farmsteads, bamboo forests and more. This hike offers lake views and a wide variety of birds and unique flora along the way. An easier option could include a self-guided walk to the *National Forestry Garden*. Total hiking time on full route approximately 5 hours. Accommodation: Furnas –as per above / breakfast, picnic lunch and a special Caldera cooked stew (from the earth) dinner is included.

Day 10 – 2 May RIBEIRA QUENTE (the Sleepy Fishing Village) WALK

Today we hike the coastal area of *Ribeira Quente* over the historic local footpaths of fish sellers and former pirates through forests and valleys with unique terrain consisting of ferns, ginger and honeysuckle. At our destination, we cross black volcanic sands for an optional swim. Historically an impoverished fishing village, it is a delight for visitors with its warm hospitality and popular seafood. From here we can visit Europe's only tea plantation for a guided tour and tasting – this visit also allows us to hike approximately 1.5 hours more and we can ascend high above the plantation to take in surreal views of the north shore areas. Return to Furnas via private transfer (20 min). Hiking time 4-6 hours today. Accommodation: Furnas – same as above / breakfast, lunch and a farewell dinner in local restaurant included this evening.

Day 11 - 3 May DEPARTURE FROM PONTA DELGADO

Pending final group flight time, free morning in Furnas to enjoy the hot springs and rich flora surrounding the hotel and village area. Afternoon private group transfer direct to airport (1 hour approximately), for departure home or onward travels. Breakfast only included.

LODGING:

We will be staying in centrally located 4 star hotels in 3 hotel locations on 2 islands (Picos and Sao Miguel). Each room will be double occupancy, have ensuite bath facility, free WIFI and breakfast. Note: we visit Faial as a day trip, hence no lodging on Faial.

3 nights at Hotel Marina Atlantico- 4 Stars- in Ponta Delgada on Sao Miguel Island This hotel is a superb 4 star property located in the heart of Punta Delgada. The airport is just 4km from the city. The building is a modern property of glass and volcanic stone located in front of the marina, overlooking the sea. Each room has AC, telephone, cable TV, internet, Mini Bar, Safe Deposit box, private bath and hairdryer.

Complimentary breakfast buffet each morning.

<http://www.bensaude.pt/hotelmariinatlantico/en/>

4 nights at Hotel Caravelas- 4 Stars- This hotel is located in the heart of the town of Madalena on Pico Island. It is close to the beach with a view overlooking the ocean to the neighboring island of Faial. The hotel has an outdoor pool and a complimentary breakfast buffet, and is only 100 meters from the maritime harbor. Each room has AC, cable TV, internet, private bath, hairdryer. www.hotelcaravelas.com.pt

3 nights at Terra Nostra Garden Hotel – 4 Stars The Terra Nostra Garden hotel is a beautiful 4 star hotel located in the beautiful Terra Nostra Botanical Park in Furnas Valley on the Island of Sao Miguel. Guests can expect to find peace and relaxation in this stunning setting of exuberant and exotic vegetation. The hotel has an indoor heated pool as well as an outdoor hot spring pool, games room, restaurant, tennis courts and WIFI in all public areas. Rooms are equipped with telephone, cable TV, ensuite bathroom, hair dryers and room service is available. Guests have free entrance to the terra Nostra Botanical Park which is considered one of the most beautiful gardens in the world by Conde Nast travel. [terra nostra garden hotel](#)

COST:

The trip cost is \$3,300 for AMC members and \$3,350 for non-members, based on double occupancy. It is recommended that non-AMC members join the AMC for \$50 and get the lower price. The trip starts on 4/22/2016 with your departure from the US and ends on 5/3/2016 with your return to the US.

Trip price includes:

- 11 nights' accommodations in comfortable centrally located 4 star hotels
- Services of two AMC trip leaders
- All meals excluding lunch on days 1, 7, and 8 and dinner on days 3 and 7
- Group airport transfers and internal island transfers via private vehicle, public buses and taxis (when needed).
- Airline ticket to/from Pico Island and ferry transfer to/from Faial Island
- Guided tour program led by a well-established adventure travel outfitter and local guides where applicable. Local taxes, restaurant and bus tips
- WIFI Internet service available for free at all hotel destinations.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Private airport transfers and additional transfers
- Beverages at meals other than breakfast
- Mineral water and alcoholic beverages
- Room bills for communication, bar tabs, private services etc.
- Non-hiking activities on day 7
- Excluded meals and trail snacks

OTHER TRIP INFORMATION

- Your transportation to and from Ponta Delgado is your responsibility. Trip leaders will advise you as much as you need. Currently, we estimate the cost of a round-

trip non-stop airfare between the East Coast and Ponta Delgado to be \$600-1,000. At this point in time, the only nonstop flights are on SATA and to/from Boston.

- We will assist you in any way to make your reservations, but you should not make any booking on your own without consulting the leaders. Once you purchase air tickets, they are wholly owned by you. It is your responsibility to get yourself to the first hotel if your flight does not arrive in time to meet the group at the airport in Sao Miguel.
- The final trip cost will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.
- AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.
- The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

READY TO APPLY?

Download the participant application documents (application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form [if appropriate], and assumption of risk and release form) from the following web folder:

[Application documents](#)

Complete the forms and enclose a registration deposit of \$1,000 payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*. Mail everything to Steve Cohen at 2802 Arbor Drive #2, Madison, WI 53711. You will not be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip seem to be a good match. The final balance of \$2,300 is due January 15, 2016.

CANCELLATION

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Minimum penalty schedule: \$50 until you are informed that the trip has a sufficient number of participants to run. After that time, the minimum cancellation fee is \$200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

We expect a group size of 16 people, including the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This trip is aimed at participants who are interested in a combination of moderate hiking AND cultural experiences. The focus will be on enjoying the beautiful settings not bagging peaks. The hiking in the Azores is substantially easier than climbing in New Hampshire's White Mountains. From a conditioning perspective, you should be able to hike five hours/day at a moderate pace with an elevation gain of 1,000': those that climb Pico will ascend/descend 3775' with a round trip journey of ~7 miles.



You should enjoy traveling and be comfortable traveling in areas which are unfamiliar to you. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, we guarantee that you will have a great time.

How we like to end a great day of hiking

Questions and requesting materials

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. We prefer to handle your inquiries by email if they are straight forward or by phone if they require discussion. The contact information is immediately below, with the leader biographies.

Your Leaders:

LEADER: **Stephen Cohen**

Steve leads hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter.



He has been a participant on many major excursions in the last ten years including trips to Alaska, the Smoky Mountains, Maroon Bells (near Aspen, CO), Grand Tetons/Yellowstone, Tour du Mont Blanc, Escalante Canyons (Utah), and rock climbing in the Dolomites (Italian Alps). In the last few years he led AMC adventure travel expeditions to the Dolomites, the Jungfrau region of Switzerland,

Patagonia, the Austrian Alps, the French Pyrenees, Greece, and the Haute Route (Chamonix to Zermatt) among other destinations. He lived in Germany and Switzerland for four years and has a good command of both the French and German languages. Steve can be reached at 617 997-6861 or scohen1234@gmail.com.

LEADER: **John Lisker**

John is a three-season leader with the Hiking/Backpacking and INTRO Committees of the AMC Boston Chapter, and has been leading hiking trips for them since 1992. He is also the current Chapter Ombudsman and a former Chapter Chair. He has led or co-led eighteen previous AMC Adventure Travel expeditions, including 4 hut-to-hut treks in the alps (2014, 2013, 2012, 2008), 3 in New Zealand (2013, 2010, 2007), and a hotels and day hikes trip in Tuscany and Cinque Terres in 2012. John can be reached at 617-244-1636 and john.lisker@juno.com.

