Discovering Azores

The archipelago of the Azores is composed of nine islands, separated by several groups, where I had the privilege of meeting some of the Central Group: Faial, Pico and Terceira and in the final São Miguel island.

The access to any of those islands is easy, no matter where you come from, as there are airlines that fly to some islands and then there are river companies with fast boats. At the airports it’s easy to take a taxi to the city center.

My first stop was in Faial island, where I arrived by plane from Lisbon. The main town is Horta, which was where I stayed, in the Azores Faial Garden, with the amazing view of Pico island. And if you go there, you will see that werever you are, you will always see that island. I rented a car, something very simple to do on the island, because everyone knows each other and there are several companies. I believe that if you come from abroad that the prices here are very affordable, because you will have purchasing power.

Therefore, I strongly advise you to visit the main town on foot, take a walk through the Marina, visit Peter Cafe Sport and have lunch at the Athletic restaurant, where the fish is fresh and will delight you. In another day, drive around the island, taking into account that in all the Azores islands, there are pedestrian rails that bring us to par with nature. So, it’s mandatory to choose a rail to do on each island.

I chose the Caldeira trail, an 8 kilometer course around the Caldeira of an ancient volcano. Take into account that on a trip to these islands you must wear appropriate footwear, because some paths are steeper and slippery. But everything is done with a smile on your face, because everything is worth the experience itself.

If you travel in the summer, know that here you can also going to a beach, on the beach of Porto Pim, which is very close to the center of Horta. This beach is inserted in a bay with volcanic origin, recognizable by the two elevations attached to it, Monte da Guia and Monte Queimado. Climb up there, but by car and witness a beautiful view at the sunset time.

To finish your visit, it is mandatory to go to the Capelinhos Volcano, which erupted on September 27th, 1957. The altitude is 501 meters and it is worth a visit to this end of the island, because there you will find the Interpretive Center of the Volcano, an underground museum, where you can know the whole history of this volcano. Outside, you will find a lighthouse, climb it and contemplate the lunar landscape, of the most recent European territory. Justo for curiosity, this area of the island grew during the eruption.

The next day, I left the Marina of the city of Horta by boat, with destination Pico, the second largest island of the Azores, which is 8.3 km from Faial.

Next destination: Pico Island

The second stage of my trip was in Pico Island, where the volcanic presence is still very present, especially in the dark soil, and the immense volcanic rock was used to make some walls, which are called curraletas. In these curraletas are planted vines, beacause inside they are protected from the high and very low temperatures that come from the sea air. So, with these conditions, the wines here produced have unique characteristics: they are fresh, fruity and saline wines. Therefore, if you visit this island, a wine tasting is mandatory, because since 2004, the Pico Island Vineyard Culture Landscape has been classified as a World Heritage Place by UNESCO. I recommend the wines Frei Gigante and Curral Atlantis for proof.

On this island I stayed in a tourist village, the Jeiroes do Mar, a quiet place, with vineyards as background and Faial Island, in the distance. If you are diving enthusiasts, here you fine the ideal place, because right next to this tourist resort you will find the Municipal Pool, with direct access to the sea.

So, as on other islands, I advise you to hire a car to move faster and, of course, if you like adventure, climb to the highest point of Portugal, Pico’s Mount, at 2351 meters. This is a pedestrian route of medium difficulty, and it is mandatory to wear comfortable footwear and adapted to steep climbs and irregular floor. It's a little cold up there, take a warm coat.

The climb to Piquinho, as it is called by the Azoreans, starts at Casa da Montanha, the place where you can get all the information to make the climb in safety. The climb can be done alone or accompanied. Good luck!

The island of Pico is quite mountainous and, at the same time, has a huge green with breathtaking landscapes. Get involved with nature, wildlife and natural pools. I recommend the Lajido Natural Pool, which is very close to the village of Madalena, which was where I slept.

Another characteristic of this island is the liqueur wine produced here, the Czar. According to its producer, Mr. Fortunato, this is the only liqueur wine in the world that is not fortified with alcohol. It reaches 20 ° C naturally, through a prolonged fermentation, which can last up to 12 months. It is a wine with a great aromatic complexity that you must taste.

For a late afternoon, taste good wine and a good cheese, all local prodution, in the Cella Bar, in the village of Madalena.

The departure of this island was by plane, although there is the possibility of going by boat, with stops in other Azorean islands: Graciosa and São Jorge. The distance covered was 185 km.

Next destination: Terceira Island

This trip to the Azores lasted only ten days, because I went with my daughter who was 5 months old. And do not forget if you have kids, the Azorean islands are an excellent choice for holidays! For the aventurers this is the ideal for holidays, because you can find several pedestrian routes, of different levels that show the beauty and splendor of each nook and makes the adventure even more challenging.

My last stop, before returning to Lisbon, was on Terceira Island, where I stayed in Azoris Angra Garden, right in the center of Angra do Heroísmo. Here I advise a visit to the Marina and, ir you have good weather, the city has a fantastic beach, Prainha. After, um the morfina for example, I recommend the visiting to the Duque da Terceira Garden, were you will find friendly corners and a magnificent landscape, but to get there you have to climb some stairs.

Hungry? I strongly advise the restaurant O Cachalote, wich serves an excellent loaf of meat. But, if you are looking for good fish, I recommend the Caneta restaurant, located in Altares, on the north side of the island. Just next by you will find the Wine Museum, in the town of Biscoitos. It deserves the visit, because there you will have the explanation of the wine’s history in this island, with unique characteristics.

In that island, I also rented a car so that I could get to know the whole island. Stop at the belvederes that you will see, because the landscape and the green that you will find are stunning.

For the more interesting about the characteristics of this island, also volcanic, visit the Interpretation Center of the Sierra de Santa Bárbara. Here, the exhibition is quite complete. Then don’t leave this island without visiting the Algar do Carvão, where you will see the most beautiful and rare volcanic jewel of the Azores; and the Gruta do Natal, where you will enter in the interior of a lava tube. Buy the ticket to visit the two places, because it’s cheaper.

And for last, don’t forget to tarde all the variety of cheese, because here in all the islands you will find the best portuguese cheese.

Enjoy Azores.