

Title:

Set Sail To The Azores Islands

Word Count:

650

Summary:

Being excellent navigators and having a deep desire to expand its territories, The Azores Islands were founded by the Portuguese in 1317. This is a clump of nine islands in the rough Atlantic Ocean about 1,400 kilometers west of Lisbon, Portugal. As a curious traveller, I always make it a habit of finding out how a city, town or in this case an island got its name. The name Azores comes from the name of a bird similar to a goshawk which is what the first settlers thought the...

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Article Body:

Being excellent navigators and having a deep desire to expand its territories, The Azores Islands were founded by the Portuguese in 1317. This is a clump of nine islands in the rough Atlantic Ocean about 1,400 kilometers west of Lisbon, Portugal. As a curious traveller, I always make it a habit of finding out how a city, town or in this case an island got its name. The name Azores comes from the name of a bird similar to a goshawk which is what the first settlers thought they saw, but it turned out that what they were seeing in abundance was just a type of eagle.

The nine islands that make up the Azores are called Santa Maria, Sao Miguel, Terceira, Graciosa, Pico, Faial, Sao Jorge, Corvo and Flores. As far as we know, they are all from a volcanic eruptions and still seem to be active as far as registering seismic movements. Culture, tradition and religion have always been closely linked and therefore there is a tight tie between the festive celebrations held all over the islands in the small chapels from the 26th of August until the 31st. This celebration is to honour the Holy Spirit which the islanders feel will protect them from any natural disaster, especially the ones related to its volcanoes.

Of all territories that Portugal once possessed, only Macao, the Azores Islands

and Madeira still remain. Under the command of Henry the Navegator, these islands became a very important stop over for ships sailing in the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, they received visitors from all over the world who not only brought riches and stories but also fruits, spices and plants. In 1420, Henry sent settlers to the island of Madeira with plants that he thought would grow well in the volcanic ground and in the mild year round climate typical there; the grapevine and sugar cane being the best product up until now, both heavily used in the Portuguese cuisine and well as other spices like the black pepper and cinnamon. But nowadays, the Azores have changed their tea, tobacco and fruit fields for livestock and tourism.

Azores Islands and Its Third-Terceira

As its name well announces, Terceira was the third island discovered by the Portuguese around 1450 having had as its original name that of Island of Jesus Christ. At the beginning Praia was the capital, being the first beach where the Flemish colonizer Jacome de Bruges first settled. But as we all know, improvements were made and they decided to use the town of Angra do Heroismo as the new capital, probably because it was well protected by the bay (angro) and the Brasil Mountain standing strong against the ocean. Here, there is a 17th century castle called Saint John the Baptist. All over the islands there are lagoons which look like big cauldrons which offer a breathtaking view of its natural surroundings. If I had to recommend one or two outstanding features, I would probably describe the beautiful Se or Cathedral with its bell tower decorated in blue, green and white tiles. Or even more so are the curious windows that the houses still have, made from stones in an arched formation with gaily painted frames such as green, blue and yellow. And the glass in these windows look like its cracked or iced.

Easy Come and Easy Go to Azores Islands

But as all practical traveller, the question of getting there and accomodations is always an important aspect to look into when planning a comfortable holiday. On all the islands, tourism is very well cared for and the hotels are tops. You can choose between sea front four star hotels to quaint rural house in the mountains or simple campings. And in the location of Lajes on the Terceira island and in Ponta Delgada in Sao Miguel island, there are airports which have daily flights between them and to Lisbon on mainland Portugal.