AZORES

The Azores are a remote archipelago consisting of 9 volcanic islands in the Atlantic Ocean. They are an autonomous Portuguese region. Because the Azores are in the Gulf Stream, they have a very mild climate and very mild sea temperatures. The water is coldest in March, 16C/61F and highest in August, 24C/75F. The most diving is done between April and November. The shark dives only happen in summer.

If you want to dive the Azores, you must pick an island. They are too far away from each other, to drive over by boat. Most diving is done around Sao Miguel, Pico, Santa Maria, Faial, Terceira and their seamounts. Every island is different, on land and in the sea. What you find here, you won’t find there, so you’ll have to make a choice in island. Or take your time and go island hopping.

The Azores are volcanic. The lava flows have made enormous underwater arches and big cave systems with interconnecting chambers. You can dive WW2 wrecks or sunken ships from the Medieval times. Because of the Gulf Stream, lots of nutrient rich water filled with plankton slides along the islands bringing the Whales, Mantas and Whale Sharks over. The Azores are also the shark capital of Europe. Next to the Whale Sharks, you can go and dive with Blue Sharks and Makos, sometimes even Hammerheads. Lots to see, lots to do. So where to go?

One hour away from Faial, you will find the Condor Bank. This seamount is protected and thus filled with fish and sharks. You will find an abundance of Blue Sharks and Shortfin Makos, especially in summer. The sharks are chummed with fish scraps out of a plastic box. It’s done in a relaxing way so the sharks stay calm and diving is relatively safe.   
Around Faial and in the strait with Pico, there are 12 dive sites. Steep walls, canyons and caves, even a little wreck in the south.

The Formiga Islets are a small group of rocks 1.5h away from Santa Maria. These islets form a marine reserve, The Formigas Bank, together with the Dollabarat Reef, a little further away. On the bank, you can spot Oceanic Mantas, Tuna, Groupers, Jacks, Galapagos Sharks and maybe even a hammerhead. This marine reserve can have very strong currents and can only be dived on when the sea is good. It is only for experienced divers.  
Santa Maria itself is loved by divers too. In summer, you can dive with Whale Sharks and Mobulas. There are immense walls covered by black coral, caves and tunnels. Beginners and experienced divers will find their way around.

From Pico, you can go and dive Princess Alice. It is 3 hours away and on the trip, you probably will see Whales and Dolphins. On Princess Alice itself, you’ll find Mantas and Mobulas, Blue Sharks, Makos, Galapagos Sharks, Tuna and maybe even a marlin. This is a dive in the blue. Because of the currents, these dives are only for experienced divers.   
On Pico, you’ll find more relaxing coastal dives next to deep walls, canyons or pinnacles.

Sao Miguel is the biggest island from the Azores. It also has the most coastal dive spots. You can find rocky reefs and sandy plateaus, arches and the famous wreck ‘Dori’. Beginners and experienced divers will find their spots they like most. On the way to the dive sites, you probably see some Dolphins going along with the boat.

The underwater archaeological park is located on Terceira. There is a famous dive site called the Cemetery of Anchors, where you dive between anchors lost during the 16th till the 20th century. You can also dive the wreck ‘Lidador’, a steamboat sunk in 1878.  
From Terceira, you can reach the Dom João de Castro bank, an underwater volcano that comes up from 1000m/0.62mi deep till 15m/50ft. You dive in the caldera of this volcano. It has exceptionally clean water and a great visibility. Because of the currents, you can see mobulas and tuna, turtles and wahoos. Again, this is a site only for experienced divers.