

This Program is adaptable



Destination

The Azores Archipelago, Portugal

[Santa Maria](#)

Santa Maria airport (SMA)

Length of stay

Eleven days/ ten nights

Summary

The Island of Santa Maria is in the Eastern Group of the Azores archipelago, along with São Miguel, 81km away. The green fields, traditional culture, the chimneys of the whitewashed houses, the dark ochre of the earth, the golden beaches and the turquoise waters make Santa Maria different from the archipelago's other islands.





Because it is the southerly and easterly Island in the Azores, Santa Maria's climate is warmer and drier, contributing to greater aridity on the land and dry vegetation with a yellowish tint reason it is also known as the Sunshine Island.

The Island has two areas with distinctive reliefs and features: one area to the west is flatter and low-lying where the airport can be found, and the houses of Vila do Porto, the largest town on the Island, and the parishes of São Pedro and Almagreira; and another more rugged area in the East of the Island, with lush vegetation, which includes the Pico Alto mountain, the highest point on the Island at 590 metres above sea level, from which you have a fantastic panoramic view.

Category of stay

Solo

Couple

Family

Friends

Groups

Divers and non-divers

Info weather conditions

The Azores' climate is neither too hot nor cold, with the most frequent rainfall between October and March. It is also true that summer temperatures are generally higher with constant humidity. Warmer temperatures than recorded, and winter temperatures may seem colder than those reported due to high winds.

When visiting the Azores, prepare for an unpredictable and ever-changing climate. You can tan in the winter by relaxing in the sun in a protected area from the winds. On the other hand, it may be necessary to wear a coat or warm up on the beach in summer, when the sun hides behind the clouds, and the wind blows.

Water temperatures: 16°C to 24°C:

Air temperatures: 12°C to 25°C.

Details of program

Santa Maria Island will be your base camp for the next 11 days. The idea is to dive into this incredible crystal-clear water 14 times.

These are some of the dive spots you will dive into.



As soon as we start to see a small lighthouse in the middle of the ocean, surrounded by tiny islets (translated from the Portuguese "Ants Islets") with only 11mts of height and 165mts of length, it means that we are arriving at the marine reserve of the Islet of the Ants, where we will dive the **Ilhéu das Formigas** spot.



Before launching the anchor, we can already see some schools of fish that abound in these crystal clear waters, such as Bermuda sea chub, grey Triggerfish and Amberjacks.

This location offers a wide variety of dive sites ranging from the "Olympia" wreck located on the south-western slope of the islands (between 30 and 50 meters deep), a small bay only 8 meters deep and about 50

meters south of the Lighthouse, or dips along the wall of the Ilheús (being the East side the most visited) and still several casualties to the North of the Ilheús.

All these places have in common the possibility of encounters with large migratory pelagics such as the beautiful Skipjack Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Barracuda, Atlantic Bonito, yellow Barracuda, and the Rust.

Sometimes this scenario is even more complete with sharks, such as the mythical Hammerhead shark and the Blue shark, or several Manta rays and even the gigantic Manta (*Manta birostris*).



In addition to the large "blue" shoals, there is abundant wildlife in this area, big fish such as Wrasses, Groupers that follow you like dogs, and Whiting, among the slopes and crevices.



The **Dollabarat Bank** is recommended only for experienced divers because it is located far from the harbour and is subject to strong currents.

The long journey of one of the islands is a great adventure, allowing divers to witness the richness and diversity of species we can see, such as cetaceans, turtles and seabirds.

As soon as we anchor the boat, the calmer sea days, we can see the shallower part of this depression, only 5 meters deep and the shadows of marine life that fly over this depression.



We start the dive in the shallow part at 5 meters, and if we explore the surroundings, we see areas 8 to 10 meters deep but falling quickly to 20 to 30 meters.

Excellent place to observe the abundant pelagic bottom life "in the blue".

There are many other dive spots for all levels and certifications. The right thing to do is fine-tune the planning on the first day at the diving centre.

Other dives close to this location:

- <https://www.portugaldive.com/best-dives/spots/santa-maria/all/all/all.html>



Although you are diving in one of the world's best locations, we have prepared the best topside experiences to show you more about the Island and the ocean. These islands are worth it.

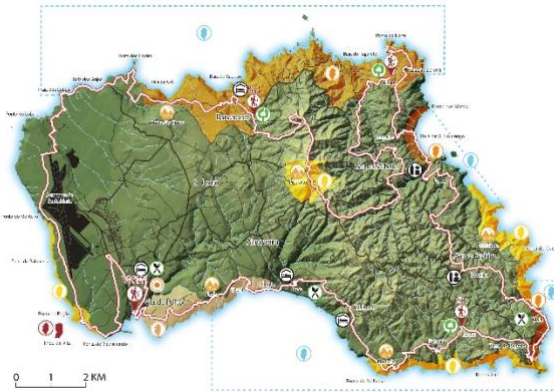
And we kid you not: after these days feeling the Azores, you wouldn't change the topside experiences with more days diving! So let's go for some tours of the Azores archipelago.

Visiting Santa Maria

After the diving or any day not diving to visit the Island is mandatory. Its beauty demands it, and there are other things worth doing besides exploring underwater.

You can walk around with no destination in mind, go for a programmed guided visit, or follow one of the many trails the Santa Maria island offers.

One of our favourites is the one on the south coast that connects the Vila do Porto village to Praia Formosa.



The trail begins at the Fortress of São Brás, military construction from the 17th century, with a view over the bay of Calhau da Roupa and the commercial harbour of the Island. Follow by the dirt road until the stream of São Francisco, where it is possible to observe several species of migrating birds, especially in the Fall/Winter, such as the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), the Eurasian coot (*Fulica atra*) and the Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquata*).

The route continues towards Pedreira do Campo, a site classified as a Natural Monument where the presence of marine fossils confirms part of the local geological history. Continue until you pass the artificial cave of Figueiral, where, once the clay was extracted for the production of roof tiles and limestone for the production of lime, resources used in the construction of the Island's typical houses. Along the climb to Touril it is possible to see some species of birds like the buzzard (*Buteo buteo rothschildii*), the rock dove (*Columba livia*), Santa Maria goldcrest (*Regulus regulus sanctaemariae*). Still, you can also be surprised by European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus algeris*).



Follow the marks along a dirt road entering a wood on the right that goes down until Prainha. Choose the alternative path at this place and in case of stormy disturbance. Arriving at this bathing area, continue the trail along the coast carefully due to the danger of vertigo. At this stage, there is a steel cable to help with the crossing. Pass by the ruins of the Fortress of São João Baptista and right ahead, a crossroad connecting to Cardal through the GR 01 SMA – Grand Route of Santa Maria.



The trail ends ahead at the parking place of Praia Formosa, unique in the Azores by the presence of limestone sand (yellow). It is where you can profit from resting and refreshing in the Atlantic waters. From here, connecting with other parts of the Island through PR 06 SMA - Areia Branca is possible. But that is another trail, another memory.



Price NET per person

[Pricing on Request](#)

Included

Airport – hotel – airport transportation
Eleven days/ ten nights in a 4-star hotel, room for 2, bed and breakfast
Seven days diving, fourteen dives or OWD course + two days diving
One-day hike
One-day tour
Tanks – AIR
Weights

Excluded

International flights
Meals or drinks not mentioned above
Equipment and diving computer

Options on request

Extra dives and night dives at your discretion and dive centre availability (payable directly to the dive centre)
12 ltr tank Nitrox +10,00 EUR
15 ltr tank +10,00 EUR
Diving Training, PADI / SSI / SDI
Other maritime activities
Other topside experiences

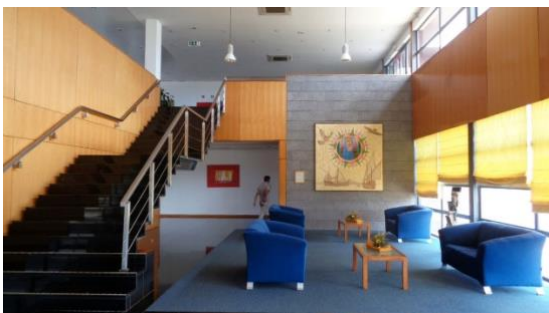


Azores pics - Santa Maria





Place of stay (option 1)
Hotel Colombo





Place of stay (option 2)
Hotel Charming Blue





About the Azores



Mother Nature has created a land full of natural beauty, ready to be explored, in the blue immensity of the Atlantic Ocean: the Azores.

To the East, on the Island of Santa Maria, the beaches of warm white sand are inviting, and the vineyards covering the slopes like an amphitheatre resemble giant staircases. São Miguel, the largest Island, is seductive with its Sete Cidades and Fogo Lagoons. The power emanates from the earth in geysers, hot thermal waters and volcanic lakes, and the tasty "Cozido das Furnas" is slowly cooked inside the ground.

In the Central Group, the islands of Terceira, São Jorge, Pico, Faial and Graciosa are set harmoniously in the deep blue sea, where whales and dolphins can be spotted to the delight of visitors. On Terceira, the World Heritage town of Angra do Heroísmo, as well as its festivals, is steeped in history. Faial is the cool blue of the hydrangeas, the marina painted colourfully by yachters from all over the world, and the extinct Capelinhos volcano, which resembles a lunar landscape. In front of Faial, there's Pico, a mountain that emerges from the sea, with vineyards planted in black lava fields, unique culture with World Heritage status. On São Jorge, the highlights are the Fajãs and the cheese, a unique speciality with an unmistakable flavour. Graceful in both name and appearance, Graciosa is an island of green fields covered with vineyards contrasting with its peculiar windmills.





In the Western group, the natural waterfalls and lakes carved out by volcanoes are dazzling on the Island of Flores. The tiny Island of Corvo has a broad, beautiful crater at its centre and attracts many birds from Europe and America.

These are the Azores. Nine islands, nine small

worlds with as many similarities as differences, but where all share the friendliness of their inhabitants.

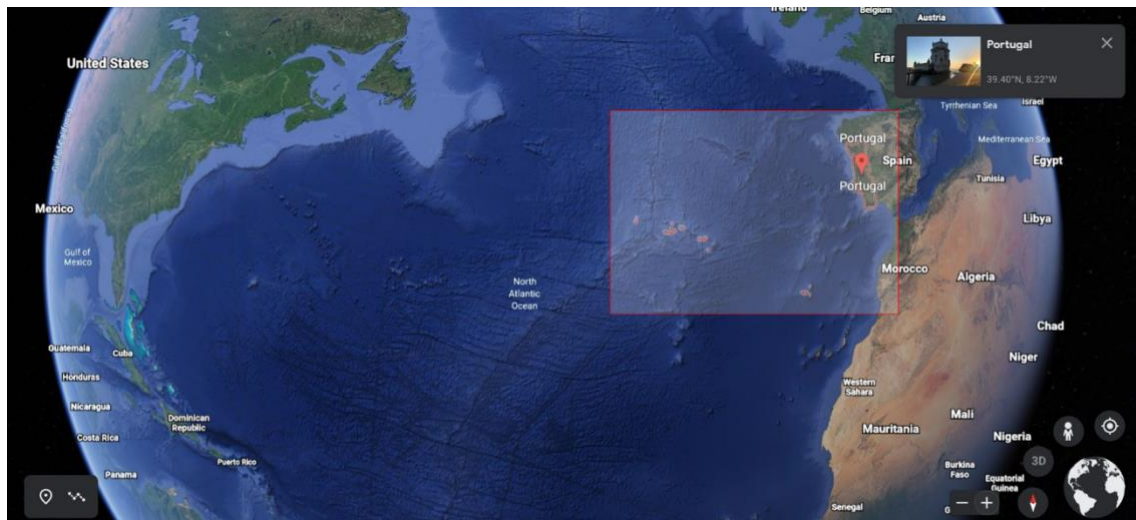


About Portugal

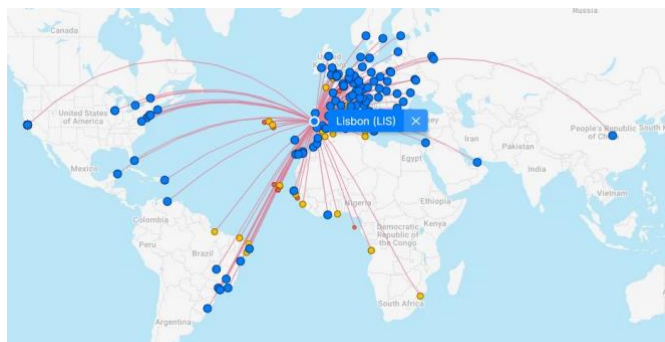
Portugal is the [most western territory in Europe](#), has a coastal range of 1000+ miles with hundreds of beach sites, and is a synonym for pleasant temperature and sunshine all year round.

Portugal is also a synonym of peacefulness, being considered the third most peaceful country in the world (ref. [Global Peace Index](#)).

LOCALIZATION



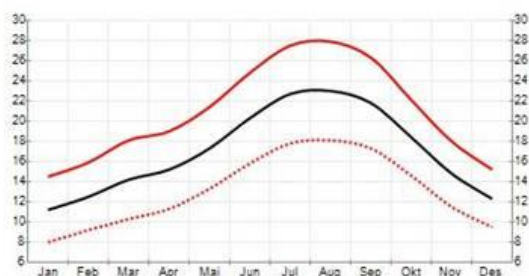
DIRECT FLIGHTS TO PORTUGAL (LIS)



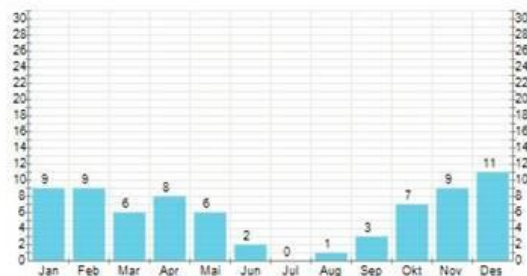
One hundred fifty-two airports worldwide have direct flights to Lisbon (LIS), spread around 138 cities in 50 countries.



Average temperature per month



Average days with precipitation per month



PORTUGAL IDENTITY CARD

Source: Visit Portugal, the Portuguese Tourism Board website

With its mild climate, 3000 hours of sunshine per year and 850 km of splendid beaches bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal is the perfect holiday destination all year round.

Portugal is the country that has the oldest borders in Europe, with an exceptional range of different landscapes just a short distance away, lots of leisure activities and a unique cultural heritage where tradition and modernity blend together in perfect harmony. Its superb cuisine, fine wines and hospitable people make this a tourist paradise of the highest quality.

Situated in the extreme southwest of Europe, just a few hours from other European capitals, Portugal attracts visitors from all over the world.

GEOGRAPHY

Portugal is situated southwest of Europe and includes the Madeira and Azores archipelagos in the Atlantic Ocean. Mainland Portugal occupies an area of 88,889 km². It is 218 km wide and 561 km long. It has 832 km of the Atlantic coast and a 1,215 km border with Spain.

The Azores are situated in the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and North America. They have an area of 2,355 km² and consist of nine islands - São Miguel and Santa Maria in the Eastern Group, Terceira, Graciosa, São Jorge, Pico and Faial in the Central Group and Flores and Corvo in the Western Group. By plane, it takes two hours to get from the Azores to mainland Portugal.

The Madeira Archipelago has an area of 741 km² and lies in the Atlantic Ocean, about 500 km from the African coast and 1,000 km from the European continent (1½ hours flying time from Lisbon). It consists of Madeira and Porto Santo islands and the uninhabited Desertas and Selvagens islands, which are nature reserves.

CLIMATE

Mainland Portugal

The climate in Portugal varies considerably from one region to another. It is influenced by the relief, latitude and proximity to the sea, which offers mild winters, especially in the Algarve.

In the Porto e Norte area and Beiras region, particularly inland, nearer Spain, the winters are colder, although the temperatures are mild compared to the rest of Europe. There is some snowfall. It occurs most in the Serra da Estrela mountains, where we find the highest point in mainland Portugal (1,991 m) and where it is sometimes possible to ski.



The summers are hot and dry, especially in the inland areas (Trás-os-Montes in north-eastern Portugal and Alentejo). Temperatures are slightly lower in the coastal regions because of the influence of the sea.

There are often warm, sunny days in autumn. Nice weather at the beginning of November is often called "St. Martin's Summer" as this saint's day is 11 November.

Azores

The climate in the Azores is influenced by the islands' latitude and the Gulf Stream, and temperatures are mild all year round. The same factors also influence the sea temperature, which is very pleasant both in winter and summer and ideal for nautical sports all year round.

Madeira

Its geographical position and mountainous relief can explain the subtropical characteristics of the weather in the Madeira Archipelago. The climate in Madeira is exceptionally mild, with average temperatures varying between 24 °C in summer and 19 °C in winter.

The sea temperature is also very pleasant all year round, thanks to the influence of the warm Gulf Stream. It varies between 18 °C in winter and 22 °C in summer.

POPULATION

Portugal has a population of about 10 million.

The population density is at its greatest in Lisbon, the capital and its suburbs, where about 1.9 million people live. The second-largest city in Portugal is Oporto in the north.

Generally speaking, more people live in the country's coastal regions than in inland areas.

RELIGION

Most Portuguese are Catholics, but the Portuguese Constitution guarantees religious freedom, and there are many different religions in Portugal.

LANGUAGE

From a Latin root, Portuguese is spoken by about 250 million people in every continent and is the 5th most spoken language in the world and the 3rd if we only consider the European languages.

Portuguese-speaking countries are scattered all over the world. Portuguese is the official language in many African countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé e Príncipe), in South America (Brazil) and Asia (East Timor, the youngest nation in the world), and it is also the official language in Macao Special Administrative Region of China.

In Portugal, many people can communicate in English, French and Spanish.

Source: VisitPortugal.com