

Self-Guided Walking in the Azores

Trip Code: SGSM

Version: SGSM Self-Guided Walking in the Azores



WALK & TREK



SELF-GUIDED



LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Walk to Sete Cidades Caldeira with its mystic blue and green crater lakes
- Enjoy the chance to get up close with nature on a whale watching boat tour
- Delight in the freedom to get off the beaten track with your own hire car
- Stay in family run hotels in Ponta Delgada, the capital of the Azores and the hot springs area of Furnas

AT A GLANCE

- Self-Guided
- Hire Car Included
- Whale Watching Trip Included
- 6 days walking and sightseeing
- Daily departures available
- Join at Ponta Delgada

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 4 nights Hotel
- 3 nights Hotel with swimming pool

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

The Azores - nine little islands amidst the wild Atlantic that are full of mystery, staggering volcanic scenery and a history of great explorers. This one week self-guided walk and drive holiday allows you the opportunity to delve into the amazing world of Sao Miguel, known as the Green Island; a reputation it certainly lives up to!

Your walks will take you to the stunning Sete Cidades Caldeira with its blue and green lakes; to the nature reserve of Fogo Lake teeming with wildlife and birds; to the summit of Pico da Vara to stand on top of this amazing island; and to the lush Furnas valley, passed waterfalls, to the forgotten village of Sanguinho. You will also have the opportunity to visit the oldest and only remaining tea plantation in Europe and embark on a whale watching tour to ensure you don't just visit Sao Miguel but experience all aspects of life on the island. The added flexibility of an included hire car and spending 4 nights in Ponta Delgada, and 3 nights in Furnas, on a B&B basis allows you the freedom to really get the most from your holiday and soak up local life.

Is this holiday for you?

We have specially designed this holiday with flexibility in mind, allowing you the opportunity to make the most of your holiday time and all this gem of the Atlantic has to offer. We have included car hire in the cost of your trip too, so that you can have even more freedom. Simply ensure the chosen driver within your party is over 25 years of age and have held a full valid driving licence for at least three years. Your walks will take you to the natural masterpieces of Sete Cidades Caldeira, Fogo Lake and through lush valleys punctuated with waterfalls. Your walks will take an average of 3-4 hours per day on marked paths, allowing plenty of time to enjoy the hotel facilities too.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Arrive in Ponta Delgada, collect your hire car and explore the capital of the archipelago.

Arrive on the island, collect your hire car and make the short journey to your hotel in the capital of the Azores, Ponta Delgada. Depending on the time of your arrival you will have time to explore the city; once a simple fishing village which attracted fisherman to its calm coves. The once sleepy village soon became the key port for the island and is today a cosmopolitan city that embraces its 5 centuries of history to create a captivating atmosphere for you to enjoy. Take a stroll under the three arched city gates and through the historic centre filled with cobbled streets, informative museums and manicured gardens. The white buildings edged in the native black volcanic rock provide a photogenic backdrop to the cities everyday life as you relax in one of the inviting cafes. We recommend paying a visit to the Convento de Nossa Senhora da Esperanca, a convent dating back to 1545 which is one of the most important convent in Portugal thanks to its statue of Santo Cristo dos Milagres gifted by Pope Paul in the 16th century. The statue has such significance that it is the star of the Santo Cristo festival when the statue is paraded around the churches of the city illuminated by thousands of lights. **SANTO CRISTO FESTIVAL:** The ritual dates back to 1700 and take place on the fifth Sunday after Easter and is well worth seeing if you are visiting the Azores at this time.



Accommodation

Hotel

DAY 2

Explore the mysterious Fogo Lake.

Your first walk of the week will explore the mysterious nature reserve of Lago do Fogo; translating to 'lake of fire'. The journey is a delightful part of the day as you watch the landscape change before you, as you move away from the urbanised port to the start of your walk. Sao Miguel is known as the green island thanks to its dense and incredible vegetation. Your route will take you to the stunning 'lake of fire', surrounded by steep sided cliffs within a nature reserve and your walk will be a great introduction to this magnificent landscape, the diversity of the island and the magnificent endemic flora and fauna which thrives on the fertile soils.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation

Hotel



Ascent

520M



Descent

500M



Time

3 hours



Distance

12KM

DAY 3

Walk to the captivating Sete Cidades.

Today begins with the short journey to the magnificent Sete Cidades Caldeira and its two crater lakes; one blue and one green, separated by a seven arch bridge that represents the 7 cities of lost Atlantis. Your route will explore this magnificent area taking you past sweet smelling hydrangeas to a viewpoint for simply breath-taking views of this natural marvel. Legend has it that the lakes were formed by the tears of a shepherd and princess on the island who shared a forbidden love, but we will let you make your own conclusions. On your drive home we recommend taking a little detour to explore the northern coastal road. Here you will find peaceful villages with traditional white houses, quaint harbours and secluded swimming areas to enjoy a dip in the Atlantic waters. In the evening, you will return to Ponta Delgada where you can enjoy one of the island's many culinary delights in a nearby restaurant.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel



Ascent
400M



Descent
400M



Time
4 hours



Distance
15KM

DAY 4

Choose to visit Europe's only tea plantation and walk along the northern coast for panoramic views.

Today you will drive to your second base for the week within the volcanic phenomena of Furnas on the west side of the island. The entire Furnas valley is in fact a giant crater that has been dormant since 1630 and there is no mistaking this part of the island is very much alive! The lush verdant forest and beautiful bright hydrangeas flourish in the fertile volcanic soils, while the hot springs bubble away, and steam holes put on a show for passers-by. Along your drive, there is opportunity to stop off at Gorreana to discover Sao Miguel's unexpected crop, tea. The island is home to the only tea plantation in Europe having been in operation since 1883. Here you can walk the fields, take a tour of the factory and discover the process of making the popular English brew before driving on to the small village of Maia on the north-east coast of the island where you can walk between nature and culture along the Praia da Viola. This fantastic walk will take you out to the coast to one of the most beautiful natural beaches of the archipelago.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel with swimming pool



Ascent
240M



Descent
240M



Time
2 hours



Distance
6KM

DAY 5

Hike on the crater of the Azores active volcano, Furnas and unwind in the hot springs of Terra Nostra Garden.

Your route today will take you to explore the crater of Furnas, surrounded by lush vegetation that has prospered in the fertile soils of this active volcano. It is this bubbling volcano which heats the delightful hot springs this part of the island has become so well known for. This natural heating system has influenced all parts of traditional island culture, not just with the social aspects of relaxing in the hot springs but the health benefits they bring to the islanders and they have even utilised the volcano in the cooking of the islands yummy cuisine; cooking the famous cozido with geothermal heat. This stew-like one pot dish is considered part of Portuguese heritage and is hearty meal for any walker. After your walk you will have time to test out the benefits of the islands thermal springs for yourself at the Parque Terre Nostra (approx. €8). The tranquillity of these natural springs within the woodlands and gardens make for a unique experience with nature not to be missed - and let's be honest it is the perfect way to unwind after a day of exploring!

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Hotel with swimming pool	 Ascent 150M	 Descent 150M	 Time 4-5 hours	 Distance 11KM
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DAY 6

Discover the tranquillity of the Ribeiro do Faial da Terra and the forgotten village of Sanguinho.

Today will take you to discover the landscapes of the south-eastern part of the island where you will hike through the exuberant vegetation of the Ribeiro do Faial da Terra. Your route will ascend the vibrant valley, punctuated with historic old mills and dramatic waterfalls to lead you to the village of Sanguinho, known as the lost village. The traditional stone houses of Sanguinho were home to the wealthy population of the island for over a century. The remote location provided refuge from the Faial da Terra River. However mass emigration for the Americas in the sixties and seventies and the quest for the amenities of modern life have left this once bustling village abandoned, waiting for you to explore. The views from here are fantastic and you will soon understand the locations appeal. Returning to your accommodation you will have time to enjoy a dip in the pool or visit the Parque Terre Nostra once more to further relax in the inviting warm springs. In the evening why not venture out to delight in the tasty Azorean cuisine in one of the nearby restaurants.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Hotel with swimming pool	 Ascent 400M	 Descent 400M	 Time 1-2 hours	 Distance 5KM
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DAY 7

Spot whales and dolphins on a half day whale watching excursion and see the islands anew.

What better way to spend your final day on the green island of the Archipelago than hopping on a boat to undertake a spot of whale watching! After enjoying a delicious breakfast at your accommodation you will drive along the southern coast to the charming village of Vila Franca; a typical fishing port who came into prosperity thanks to pineapple cultivation. The town is full of architectural charm but its crowning glory sits just off the coast; the islet of Vila Franca do Campo. The islet is a result of a sunken volcanic crater that has created a tranquil lake protected from the wild Atlantic by the crater rim and endemic vegetation. You will have time to enjoy a coffee and a stroll through the town before, weather permitting, you board your boat for a 3 hour whale watching excursion (included). The Azores are one of the world's largest whale sanctuaries with whale watching season lasting from April right through to October, during that time some 20 different cetaceans pass through the waters surrounding the islands, some of which are resident in the area and others passing through on their annual migration. There is simply nothing quite like the exhilaration of witnessing whales frolic in their natural habitat and dolphins jumping alongside the bow of the boat. This is a day to bring your binoculars with you and hopefully the whales will be happy to put on a show for you before you return to Ponta Delgada to raise a glass to a great week in the Azores.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 8

Departure Day.

Enjoy a leisurely morning on the island and take a final stroll along the coast before making your way back to Ponta Delgada Airport where you will return your car.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your map and route notes
- Whale watching boat trip (3 hours weather dependant)
- Hire car

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to/from Ponta Delgada Airport
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Personal equipment
- Any supplements connected to the car hire
- Fuel for the hire car
- Any additional transport
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

Your Self-Guided Pack & Route Notes

Each self-guided holiday comes with comprehensive route notes and a map or pocket guidebook of the area you are exploring. The route notes contain information about the places you will visit and the local transport you might need, along with the detailed route notes for your daily walks or cycle rides. We even include some tips for the best places to stop for lunch.

You can expect to receive your Self-Guided Pack containing your route notes, a map or guidebook, and all your relevant documents, no later than 3 weeks before your holiday start-date. We will send your documents using a signed-for courier so that you can track your package and know that it is safely on its way to you. For bookings of more than 4 people we will send an additional Self-Guided Pack. If you do not need this additional pack please inform our Sales Team. Your pack will be sent to the lead booker, so please remind them to pack it before setting off.

Should your self-guided trip be part of a longer adventure requiring you to leave home more than three weeks before your holiday start-date, please inform our Sales Team so that we can make alternative delivery arrangements.

Car Hire

Car hire is included in the cost of this trip and is supplied by our partner Avis.

The car type included on this trip is based on the number of passengers in your group. We include the following car types:

- Category A hire for solo travellers
- Category B hire for bookings of 2 passengers
- Category C hire for bookings of 3 to 4 passengers

Upon booking with us you will be asked to provide the name and driving license details of the person within your party who will be the designated driver for your group. It is important to note that the driver must be over the age of 25 years old and have held a clean licence EU/UK driving license for a minimum of 3 years. It is possible to add an additional driver to the booking in resort for an additional fee.

Please note that the car hire office is open 06.00-23.00 daily and cars must be collected/ returned within these times. We ask that you take this into consideration when choosing your flights.

Please ensure you read the terms and conditions of the car hire www.avis.co.uk/TermsAndCondition

You can also find answers to frequently asked questions and further information regarding our self-guided holidays with car hire [here](#).

Self-Guided Families

Our Self-Guided Holidays are perfect for your next family holiday and are suitable for children of all ages.

Our partner hotels and accommodations are able to provide cots for young children, and some offer family rooms. We can also arrange hire of children's bikes and tag along bikes for most of our self-guided cycling trips and with trips such as Lake Constance and the Danube offering routes on designated cycle paths you can rest assured in keeping your family safe.

As a parent we trust that you know your own child's capabilities, so please read the itinerary details to ensure the distances covered each day are suitable for your family. If this is a first time walking holiday for your family, a centre based trip is a fantastic option as it allows you to easily opt out of a days walking if a day of building sand castles, swimming in the pool or visiting museums is calling instead.

Please discuss this further with our sales team who will be happy to assist in picking the best trip for your family.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts and ends at Ponta Delgada Airport. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The nearest airport for this trip is Ponta Delgada Airport, well-served with departures from UK regional airports. It is also where you will collect your hire car for the week.

From the arrivals hall follow the signs for hire cars and the green signs for the Ilha Verde customer desk - Ilha Verde is Avis' local subcontractor. Please see the Hire Car Confirmation notes above to ensure you are suitably prepared to collect your vehicle.

Meal Plan

This trip is on a bed and breakfast basis to allow you the most flexibility during your holiday.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

The food in the Azores has a Portuguese and Mediterranean flavour, but is more rustic and hearty than its mainland counterparts. The Azorean cuisine includes dishes such as kale soup, with chunks of potato and sausage and pot roast style dishes baked with tomatoes, onion and garlic. Seafood is a large part of the diet as well, which is expected in such a location. Very sweet desserts are found on the menu in between ones made with pineapple which is grown locally. A speciality is the dough balls rolled in sugar and have a similarity to doughnuts (yum!). The islands also make their own wine and gin!

Accommodation

We have handpicked two great family run hotels for this trip both chosen for their fantastic locations and warm hospitality. You will spend 4 nights in the 2* Hotel Alcides in the heart of Ponta Delgada's historic centre. The hotel has a well-reputed restaurant and is popular with locals and visitors alike. You will also spend 3 nights at the 3* Vista do Vale on the eastern side of the island in Furnas close to the botanical gardens and hot springs of Parque Terra Nostra. The hotel also has a swimming pool and lovely terrace, perfect for unwinding after a day exploring. Both accommodations are on a bed and breakfast basis, allowing you the flexibility to enjoy the many fantastic restaurants on the island.

It is possible to arrange additional nights accommodation if you would like to enjoy this magnificent region a little longer. Please speak to one of our sales team for further details.

During high season you may be booked into an alternative accommodation of a similar standard in the area.

WHY NOT TREAT YOURSELF TO A HOTEL UPGRADE?

On this trip we are pleased to offer you the opportunity to upgrade your accommodation to 4* hotels. Perfect if you are looking to treat yourself for a special occasion, or simply prefer to travel with a little more luxury. In Ponta Delgada you will stay in the Hotel Talisman, overlooking a beautiful garden within the historic centre. The Hotel Talisman is full of art deco charm and boasts a rooftop pool and a cosy lounge area, perfect for relaxing with a good book. You will also spend 3 nights in the 4* Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, located within Parque Terra Nostra. This luxurious hotel is surrounded by the tranquillity of nature, and its exceptional location within the park allows you exclusive access to the thermal springs once the crowds have left for the day.

Please speak to one of our sales team to find out more.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a daypack. Luggage with wheels is useful for this holiday.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

Severe Allergies

Please inform our KE Sales and support team of any severe allergies you may have before travel. We will always do our best to help but we are unable to guarantee an allergy free environment on our KE trips. We advise that you always carry your own treatment for the allergy with you such as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' if required. We also recommend that you discuss this with your accommodation on arrival so that they can better assist you.

Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided walking holiday is that you decide the pace however getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable your walks will be. You should be comfortable with walking 3 to 4 hours for consecutive days.

Climate

The Azores are situated in the middle of the Atlantic, so the weather is changeable! However, as the islands benefit from the warmth of the Gulf Stream, temperatures remain mild and moderate throughout the year. During the summer months the temperatures tend to range from 15-30 degrees centigrade, with the majority of days being sunny, and it can also be quite humid at this time. In the late spring and early autumn the temperatures are slightly cooler and there is a higher chance of rain. Temperatures rarely ever fall beneath 10 degrees centigrade, and rainy days can occur across all seasons. It is not uncommon to experience a mixture of weather in the same day at any time of year, rather like in many places in the UK, so it is always best to be prepared with warm and waterproof layers and appropriate footwear.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

Field Guide to the Birds of the Atlantic Islands by Tony Clarke

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Self Guided Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good grip soles
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Hat
- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Long/short hiking trousers
- Hiking socks
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit inside your rucksack

- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Waterproof phone cover
- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Tupperware for picnics
- Walking poles
- Headtorch & spare batteries
- Your self-guided route notes

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers. [>> Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons on a twin or double basis, however we can quote for any number of travellers, including solo travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

A hire car is included in the cost of this holiday. The chosen driver within your party MUST be over 25 years of age and held a full valid driving licence for at least 3 years. We cannot confirm your booking until we have received the name and driving licence number of the driver within your party.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation before or after your self-guided trip, ask our sales team to find out more about this.

Our sales team will be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights or alternatively you may wish to book your own flights with a low cost carrier from your nearest regional airport.

Please note that the car hire office is 06.00-23.00 daily and cars must be collected/ returned within these times. We ask that you take this into consideration when choosing your flights and ask that you DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Why Choose KE

why ke?

We have designed this trip to showcase the very best of Sao Miguel whilst providing you the ultimate flexibility from your holiday with a choice of walks on most days, recommended excursions and even an option to upgrade your accommodation. In addition, we have included a hire car and a whale watching tour in the cost of your trip.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 09/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change