

MACARONESIA with Jonathan Hodgson

Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands & Cape Verde

21 days

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Day 1 Arrival in the Azores, Portugal

Arrival in Ponta Delgada, Azores (PDL), located on San Miguel Island, the largest in the archipelago.*

Welcome to Macaronesia, a collection of four archipelagos in the North Atlantic Ocean belonging to three countries: Portugal, Spain, and Cape Verde. Apart from the Azores and Madeira, which are considered mainly as part of Europe, the other islands of Macaronesia are closer to Africa. The name is derived from the Greek words for "islands of the fortunate," a term used by Ancient Greek geographers for islands to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar. Macaronesia is occasionally misspelled "Macronesia" in false analogy with Micronesia, an unrelated Pacific archipelago.

Ponta Delgada is a graceful centre with cobbled streets meandering down to a marina lined with restaurants. As most flights from North America land in the morning, we recommend that you spend some time exploring its historical centre where you will discover the squares, well-tended gardens, and handsome monuments built when Ponta Delgada was an important trading port in the 18th and early 19th centuries. For a pleasant overview of Ponta Delgada, stroll along the town's harbourfront promenade.

This evening we assemble for our welcome dinner and trip orientation.

* As many flights arrive in Ponta Delgada in the early morning, we have requested early check-in at our hotel. Hopefully we will be able to confirm closer to departure.

Overnight in Ponta Delgada.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Sao Miguel: West Island Exploration

Today's excursion takes us through the heart of the island and out to the western end of it. As we leave Ponta Delgada we will stop at Ponta de Ferraria and Ponta do Escalvado. At Miradouro do Escalvado we will have a superb view over the fishing village of Mosteiros, with its beautiful summer homes, beaches, and natural pools.

The westernmost part of the island is where the mountains and lakes of Sete Cidades ('Seven Cities') are situated. The southwest road takes us along the coast through green pastures, and we will stop at the Vista do Rei (King's View), one of the most stunning panorama spots of the island. From here the blue and green crater lakes can be seen. The volcanic caldera lake of Lagoa das Sete Cidades is one of the great natural wonders of the Azores archipelago, and absolutely mesmerizing in its beauty. Nearly five km long and 2 km wide, this is the largest freshwater lake in the Azores and, in fact, consists of two lagoons - the Green Lagoon and the Blue Lagoon. An emerald mantle of rolling hills and lush vegetation frames both, and in some places the cliffs drop 500 metres in to the mirror-like waters. We will enjoy a short walk to the viewpoint of Boca do Inferno, where we admire the view over the crater of Sete Cidades. Later we will visit the farming village of Sete Cidades, situated right on the crater floor.

We will stop at Pico do Carvao where the north and south coasts of the island can be seen. From here we head to the north coast and along to the town of Ribeira Grande where we will see the historical centre and some of the islands most beautiful cliffs. We rise to the Fogo Lake, the most isolated and untouched lake of Sao Miguel. Driving down from the north coast our next stop is at Caldeira Velha where we discover a waterfall located on the north slope of the Fogo Volcano. Our next stop is a the Lake of Fire, another breathtaking caldera with a lake at the bottom. Its remote setting, more or less in the middle of Sao Miguel Island, makes this impressive volcanic crater especially appealing. There are no settlements here as the entire area is a protected nature reserve, and the crater's walls are studded with a number of endemic plant species. Our last views of the day will be from the top of the volcano of Pico da Barrosa (947 metres).

Overnight in Ponta Delgada.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 3 Ponta Delgada - Faial Island: Capelinhos Volcano & Horta

This morning we fly to Faial Island (+/- 1 hour). Immediately upon arrival, we'll begin our sightseeing program, starting in the main town of Horta.

Faial is the third most populous island of the Archipelago with a population of 15,000 (2011 data). The island is part of the Central Group and is the westernmost corner of the so-called "Triangle Islands," which also include São Jorge and Pico, the latter of which we will visit tomorrow. One delightful aspect of the Azores, is the differences (some subtle, some not so much) between them -- from vegetation and climate, topography and history, to matters economic and political, mythology, sports affiliations, accent, and cuisines.

In the 18th century the development of whale hunting brought the early whaling fleets to Horta. By 19th century, Horta had become an important sea port, and a stopping point for a large number of yachts crossing the Atlantic. The island is located on the edge of the tectonic divide between the North American Plate and the European Plate, making it one of the most western points of Europe (the farthest is the tiny Azorean island of Corvo, located to the northwest). The island's scenery offers sandy beaches, green hills, and crystal blue ocean views. The volcanic origin of Faial can be easily observed on the island due to numerous calderas, craters, cones, lava fields, and natural boiling water springs.

Our first stop on Faial is the dedicated to the underwater volcano that erupted in spectacular fashion off the island of Faial in 1957. This event afforded scientists a unique opportunity to study a rare geological phenomenon from the moment of its birth to the day it fell dormant. The centre's displays and exhibits tell the story not just of this volcano, whose 13-month-long eruption prompted half of the island's population to emigrate to North America, but also of the tectonic forces shaping the Azores' extraordinary landscape. Afterwards we will visit a local cheese production and taste some delicious cheeses.

We continue with a visit to the Scrimshaw Museum (while baggage is delivered at the hotel), located above one of the waterfront's best-known restaurants and watering holes. The museum contains a magnificent set of pieces carved from the teeth of sperm whales, engraved with beautiful sailing boats, mermaids, images of whale-hunting, among many others. This is a private collection belonging to the owners of the Peter Sports Café next door, a famous meeting place for seafarers from all over the world.

Overnight in Horta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Faial & Pico Islands

This morning we take the local ferry the short crossing to Pico Island (+/- 30 minutes) for a full day tour of this unique and beautiful island.

Our first stop involves an easy walk through a good example of the vineyards for which Pico is renown. The wine, salt spray, and rocky volcanic landscape have combined to create a unique way of growing grape vines, sheltered by complex volcanic stone walls that keep heat in and winds at bay. This unique cultivation method and attendant wine cultural tradition has earned Pico's vineyards Unesco World Patrimony since 2004.

We then head up to the unique landscape comprised of craters and lagoons that form the Achada Plateau of Pico Island. To make the day even more exciting we will don helmets and grab flashlights for a stroll through the largest lava tube in Portugal, with amazing geological formations in an unforgettable underground experience (there is a main flight of stairs at the entrance/exit; the walk through the tube itself is level but uneven with some stooping required. Not for the claustrophobic!).

Our journey across the island takes us back down to sea level and a break for lunch, * included today. Our meal features local dishes made from locally-sourced ingredients; you will also have a chance to sample the wines for which Pico is famous.

Then we will visit the Whalers' Museum in Lajes do Pico, known as the Whaler's village, to learn about the story of whaling activity in the Azores. Dedicated to the socio-economic influence of the whaling industry in the region, the museum was established in the abandoned whaling factory used for many years in the processing of whale blubber into oil. Whaling in the Azores ended in the 1980's, but pride in whaling tradition and history is still very much alive, just like the whales that these days are worth far more alive, comprising an important aspect of local tourism.

Our (roughly) circular route takes us along the coast where we can stop to enjoy coastal views and to admire the attractive and striking local construction from lava stone and colourful trim. Prior to catching our ferry back to Faial (time-permitting!), we can stop at Cella Bar, named the "most beautiful in Europe" for its unique design and stunning seaside location. Enjoy a refreshing drink on the patio before getting dropped at the port for our return journey to Faial.

Due to our substantial lunch today, we do not include dinner this evening. If you still have an appetite, an interesting choice is Canto da Doca, where you can cook your own dinner on a super-heated slab of lava rock, or, of course, Pete's Sports Café.

Overnight in Horta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 5 Horta, Faial - Fly to Terceira Island: Island Touring

Today we fly the short distance to the island of Terceira.

This is one of the larger islands of the archipelago, with a population of 56,000 in an area of approximately 396.75 square kilometres (153.19 square miles). It is the location of the Azores' oldest city, Angra do Heroísmo, the historical capital of the archipelago and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After landing at the airport, also a United States Air Force detachment, we head off for a leisurely journey across the island, known for expansive views of impossibly green agricultural land with the ubiquitous Azorean volcanic cones littering the landscape. Our highlight today, a visit to very few places in the world allow you to explore and go inside a volcano. Algar do Carvão meaning "coal pit" due to the cave walls formed from dark black lava, is the only place on earth where you can see two structures, the chimney and chambers, without being cooked alive. What stands out as unique are the stalactites and stalagmites formed by amorphous silica.

To enter we go down the volcano chimney that is lava free today, uncommon in most volcanoes, and a tunnel and staircases offer access to the caves below. At the bottom there is a crystal clear lake formed by rainwater. Unlike our lava tube experience on Pico, the caves here are large and roomy and open to the sky above; bring a light jacket as it can be chilly inside.

We then head for Angra do Heroísmo, the island's principal city and location of our accommodation. We'll take in a view of the city from, what else, a volcanic cone that dominates the town, and then have a leisurely stroll through its centre and the gardens at its heart. Angra was an obligatory port of call for the fleets of equatorial Africa and of the East and West Indies routes during their voyages to and from Europe from the 15th century until the advent of steamships in the 19th century. According to UNESCO, the port of Angra is also the eminent example of a creation linked to the maritime world: It is directly and tangibly associated with a development of a universal historic significance, the maritime exploration that allowed exchanges between the world's great civilizations.

Overnight in Angra do Heroísmo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Terceira - Fly to Ponta Delgada: Whale Watching - Furnas

Today (early start!) we fly back to Sao Miguel and, after a break for coffee, enjoy an exciting whale watching excursion from the port of Ponta Delgada.

Our vessel is large and stable and well-appointed, but still nimble enough to respond quickly to the whale spotters positioned on the hills around us; many of these same spotters used to alert hunters back in the day when whaling was a major industry. Our tour is preceded by a briefing in which a biologist explains how the Azoreans have converted whale hunting to whale watching. The briefing also includes information about safety, rules of observation, and respect for the animals, and an overview of what may be sighted during the tour. The excursion is led by nature guides who provide detailed explanations and collect scientific data during the tour. The Azores are a permanent home or point of passage for more than a third of the world's whale and dolphin species; sperm whales, common dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, and Risso's dolphins are present around the Azores archipelago throughout the year. We'll also be here at the right time for blue and fin whales, the largest and second largest of the cetaceans.

After our excursion, and some free time for lunch in town, we'll head to the eastern side of the island. The village of Furnas, as well as the nearby volcanic complex of geothermal springs, is situated beside the easternmost of the three spectacular caldera lakes -- Lagoa das Furnas.

Our hotel is a luxurious spa-style property with a huge thermal pool and adjacent botanical garden. If you choose to soak in the massive pool after our arrival, please note that darker coloured suits are best as the water is rich in iron and might stain light-coloured fabric.

Arrival at the hotel around 3.00pm.

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Overnight in Furnas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Sao Miguel: Furnas & East Island Touring

The Parish of Furnas is located in the middle of a huge volcano, and the “Caldeiras of Furnas” is a place of hot water springs and medicinal mud where visitors come to bathe in the hot pools! While in Furnas, we will spend some time in the centre of the village with its gushing geysers, burping mud, and hot bubbling springs.

We then head to Pico dos Milhos for an overview (mists permitting!) of Furnas valley. Finally we will exit the volcano and head up to a spectacular panorama of the village of Vila Franca and the famous lagoon – the crater of a submarine volcano about 5,000 years old. We will stop in the historical centre of Vila Franca do Campo, the former capital of the island.

As we cross towards the north side of the island, one of our stops will be at Miradouro de Santa Iria, from where we have a dramatic view over the north coast. Weather-permitting we will be able to spot the volcano of Sete Cidades as well as Pico da Vara, the highest point of the island (1105 metres). We will also make a stop at the Gorreana tea plantation, one of the only tea plantations in Europe!

We will visit Parque Natural da Ribeira dos Caldeiros where waterfalls and gardens give a special touch to the park. At the Vista dos Barcos viewpoint we will see “Farol do Arnel”, the oldest lighthouse of the Azores dating back to 1876. Ponta do Sossego is a beautiful garden and scenic lookout surrounded by mountains. At the view point of “Pico Longo” we can see the village of Povoacao, where the first settlement was established back in 1432.

With a stop for lunch en route, we plan to be back in Furnas in time for some well-deserved down-time in this pretty spot. We recommend a walk through the botanical gardens located on the hotel property.

Overnight in Furnas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Sao Miguel: Faial da Terra Hike & Time at Leisure

Today's activity takes us for a light circular hike around Furnas Lake* Furnas Lake is known for its bubbling, mineral rich geothermal pools and they are used for preparing Cozida, a traditional stew cooked in a hole in the ground heated by volcanic activity

Most of our route is flat/undulating on a well-maintained track; the trail is through the forest and if it has rained recently, which is likely, you'll need good walking shoes with a decent tread for the slippery spots). The overall distance is 8km (5 mi) and the duration should be +/- 3 hours depending on our stopping time along the way. Our total elevation gain/loss is approximately 200m (656 ft).+

Our outing will also include a stop at one of the Azores' many pineapple farms, where we explore the traditional greenhouses where the Azorean pineapple has been cultivated for more than 150 years. We'll see the fruit, each one of them in different stages of the cycle, and get to know all the secrets and peculiarities of this extraordinary crop.

We return to our hotel with an afternoon at leisure during which you can take advantage of our hotels spa services, outdoor hot spring pool, and lush gardens.

* If you are uncertain about your suitability, please confer with your Tour Leader who, at this point, will be familiar with your abilities. If you choose to forgo and enjoy a break at the hotel, we'll see you at dinnertime.

Overnight in Furnas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Furnas - Ponta Delgada - Fly to Funchal: West Madeira Exploration

Early this morning we transfer to the airport to fly to the island of Madeira, also part of Portugal.

With a subtropical climate warmed by the Gulf Stream, this volcanic outcrop off the coast of Africa is Portugal's own floating garden. The rich volcanic soil promotes an astonishingly verdant array of flowers, plants, and trees, both in the wild and in some beautifully-cultivated gardens. Here we discover a lush and vertical landscape with a wild terraced terrain. This 36 mile by 14 mile island (70% is national park) packs more into its chaotic terrain than most areas 5 times its size.

Funchal, where we will be spending our nights, the capital of the Madeira archipelago, was declared a city in the 1500s and became an important point between the old and new worlds. The laid-back city owes much of its historical prominence to the white gold, the Madeiran sugar.

Today we explore the west, crossing mountain passes and traversing Madeira's highest plateau. Prepare for some spectacular panoramas! We first pass through the traditional fishing village of Camara de Lobos, and make a stop at the Pico da Torre viewpoint. Here the port is really just a small creek, with a beach, a harbour and houses heaped up around the bay. We will continue up to the lofty sea cliffs of Cabo Girao, the highest sea cliffs in Europe (580m) / the second highest sea cliffs in the world. From here you can enjoy some beautiful views.

A glass bottomed skywalk hangs out over the top of the cliff! Sea erosion has led to the formation of caves and terraces along the coastline, and the local population have created small plots for crops, forming an incredible watercolour landscape.

In Ribeira Brava we will see the 16th century mother church. Along the promenade we will pass by the town's landmark, the fort of São Bento. We then visit what many consider to be the most beautiful village on the island, Ponta do Sol (point of the sun). The town, with its old restored buildings, was once described as a 'quiet and pretty little village shoe-horned into the folds of a steep valley'. We continue to make our way up through the Laurissilva forest, and reach the plateau of Paul da Serra, which translated roughly is "mountain plain". This is Madeira's biggest and highest plateau, situated at 1400m (4,593 ft), and here we can enjoy another 'Levada walk'. Our next stop is the village of Porto Moniz on the north coast, which is famous for its natural volcanic rock pools. This is Madeira's most north-western valley, and the dramatic village is situated at the foot of the mountain.

Our next stop is at the picturesque village of Seixal where local vegetable gardens and vineyards are surrounded by heather broom. We will see the famous "Brides Vale" falls which plummets directly into the sea. Our scenic coastal route then brings us to the charming fishing village of São Vicente.

Overnight in Funchal.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Funchal & East Madeira Exploration

Today we will tour the city of Funchal, including the 'Old Town', one of the most attractive areas of the city. Portuguese settlers colonized the coast in the early 1400's, and over the years the population grew as international trade attracted the attention of much of Europe. Today we discover a modern city with over 110,000 inhabitants. Located right in the centre of Funchal is a busy and colourful covered market (Mercado dos Lavradores). Here we discover a great variety of fresh fish, tropical fruits, spices, colourful flowers and some local crafts. This is also the place to find local delicacies such as Madeira wine or honey cake.

The narrow and cobbled Rua de Santa Maria is the oldest street in Funchal, dating back to the 15th century. When the heavy storms of 2010 severely damaged the old town, the municipality launched the project 'Art Open Doors' in order to revitalize the area. They invited local artists to paint the doors in the street and the result is a vibrant, colourful, artistic street, full of energy. For the best view of Funchal we will take the cable car to the Monte Village. The 15-minute journey takes us 560 meters above the city, with a 360° panoramic view of Funchal, the dramatic mountain landscape, and the shimmering Atlantic Ocean. Nearby is the Madeira Story Centre, an excellent museum that charts the history and culture of the Madeira archipelago.

Monte Village was built in 1565 as a summer refuge for Funchal's aristocracy. Constructed in 1741, the Church of Our Lady of the Monte is the resting place of Charles I, the last ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Those who climb to the bell tower terrace are rewarded with a spectacular view.

This afternoon we explore the eastern side of the island with its dramatic mountain, forest and coastal views. Just a short distance from the capital is the cultural village of Camacha, known as 'the village of basket makers', and the centre of Madeira's willow craft industry.

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Our journey then takes us up to Pico do Arieiro (1818 meters/5,965 ft), one of the island's highest peaks with spectacular views. After visiting the highest (drivable) peak in Madeira, we will head towards Ribeiro Frio, a popular starting point for 'levada' walks. Madeira was once completely covered by laurel 'Laurissilva' forest, a relic from prehistoric times. Laurel forest, also called laurisilva or laurissilva, is a type of subtropical forest found in areas with high humidity and relatively stable, mild temperatures. This region still has much of its original vegetation, and here we will enjoy an easy walk. As UNESCO put it... "an outstanding relict of a previously widespread laurel forest type. It is the largest surviving area of laurel forest and is believed to be 90% primary forest.". This is one of the best places to really appreciate Madeira's natural heritage.

We then visit Santana, which is famous for its typical A-framed cottages with thatched roofs. We then make our way to Porto da Cruz, Caniçal, and Ponta de São Lourenço - with some of the best views you can get on the island. From here you can see both coasts as well as Porto Santo and the Desertas Islands. We also stop in Curral das Freiras ('Nuns Valley'), a small village nestled between almost perpendicular mountains in the heart of the island.

Overnight in Funchal.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Madeira, Portugal - Fly to Tenerife, Canary Islands (Spain): City tour of Santa Cruz de Tenerife

Today we fly from Madeira to Tenerife (North) in the Canary Islands.

The Canary Islands (Islas Canarias), also known as the Canaries (Canarias), are an archipelago and autonomous community of Spain located 100 kilometres (62 miles) west of Morocco. The Canaries are among the outermost regions of the European Union proper; it is also one of the eight regions with special consideration of historical nationality recognized as such by the Spanish Government. The Canary Islands are the most southerly region of Spain and the largest and most populated archipelago of the Macaronesia region.

We land on the largest island and begin a sightseeing program in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, a city and capital (jointly with Las Palmas) of the Canary Islands. This good looking and wholly Spanish city is home to evocative, brightly-painted buildings, sophisticated and quirky shops, excellent museums, and a tropical oasis of birdsong, fountains, and greenery in the city park.

We start at the Museum of Nature and Man (MNH), located in the Old Civil Hospital, an emblematic building in the island's capital and a fine example of the islands' typical neoclassical architecture. The museum offers the chance to learn more about the natural riches of the Canary Islands, and also to discover the most important collection existing on the culture of the "guanches", a native people who inhabited the island of Tenerife before the arrival of the first European settlers.

We'll walk to the parish mother church of Nuestra Señora de La Concepción, the main Catholic church in the city, built where a chapel used to stand that was erected by the conquerors of Santa Cruz. The tower was raised in 1786 and is one of the most easily recognizable landmarks in the old quarter. Because of the extension work carried out over the years, it is the only church with five naves on the entire archipelago and a fine example of Canarian Baroque architecture.

We'll also visit the interior the impressive and unique Auditorio de Tenerife. A marvel of the architectural avant-garde, created by Santiago Calatrava, which has become the cultural, social, and symbolic engine for the Canary Islands.

Overnight in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Tenerife Island Touring

Today we the head to the Palmetum, a 12-hectare botanical garden that specializes in palm trees and a project unique in the world. It has transformed a municipal rubbish dump into a recreational space for plant lovers, bursting with spectacular plant life brought here through partnerships with institutions from all over the world. The gardens are home to the greatest collection of palms in Europe, thought to be the largest botanical collection of tropical island palms in the world.

Our journey then takes a panoramic route along Monte Esperanza towards the Teide National Park, including photo stops.* Teide National Park, located in the centre of the island of Tenerife, is the largest and oldest of the four national parks on the Canary Islands. From its surface area of 190 km² (18,990 hectares), Mount Teide rises up to a height of 3718 m, which makes it the highest peak in Spain. There are many

services organized for visitors so that they can discover and enjoy this area: a convenient road network across the entire park, two visitor centres that reveal some of the park's secrets, a bar and restaurant area for refreshment, and abundant vantage points to gain a panoramic view of the whole park. Our program today is informal and weather-dependent, but will concentrate on the unique flora, fauna, and landscape of this special place.

We continue to the spectacular Barranco de Masca with a brief stay in the picturesque village before our last stop the small town of Cristobal de la Laguna (likely a quick stop only), widely considered to be the most beautiful in Tenerife. The historic town centre is a gem, with narrow poker-straight streets flanked by pastel-hued historic mansions, inviting bars, and idiosyncratic small shops. Its layout provided the model for many colonial towns in the Americas and, in 1999, La Laguna was added to the Unesco list of World Heritage sites.

* Please note that we do not include the cable car on our trip, as it is often closed due to weather and takes quite a chunk of time out of our day. Past travellers have also noted that time could be better spent down in the park, rather than removed far above it.

Overnight in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Day Trip to La Gomera Island

We have an early morning departure to catch our ferry from Los Cristianos to Gomera Island. Our visit begins with an ascent up to the mountains to the viewpoint of Mirador de las Carboneras for photos and to enjoy the scenery of the Hermigua Valley.

Continuing on to the Garajonay National Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, we descend through La Palmita arriving at the small village of Las Rosas, where we stop for a typical island lunch and enjoy a demonstration of the unique Gomeran whistling language, El Silbo.

Passing through the beautiful village of Hermigua, we arrive in San Sebastian, where there is free time to visit La Torre del Conde (The Count's Tower), La Casa de Colon (Christopher Columbus's House), the Asuncion Church, and/or simply stroll around the capital, before returning to Tenerife, arriving back at our hotel probably around 8pm.

Due to the length of the day and our hearty lunch, we'll leave the evening meal up to you with a view to retiring at a decent hour tonight.

Overnight in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 14 Las Palmas, Canary Islands - Sal, Cape Verde

This morning we board the ferry to Gran Canaria (approx 3 hours). Our journey to Gran Canaria a logistical move in order to place us for tomorrow's flight to Cape Verde, which departs only from Las Palmas. But why not see a bit of Gran Canaria while we're here?

Crowning an island of tall cliffs to the north and extensive beaches to the south, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is a city which offers sun, sea and an exceptional historic legacy. The combination of the aboriginal Guanche culture, its colonial past, and the fact that it is only 90 miles from the coast of Africa create a distinctive character resulting from the mix of Europe, America, and Africa.

We'll head to the centre of the Island: Tejeda is the home of the Nublo rock, the symbol of Gran Canary. The Tejeda depression arose from a volcanic crater, standing over which is a mountain crowned by several rocky promontories, such as the Nublo rock, an enormous chunk of basalt which is the symbol of Gran Canary, and the Bentayga rock, where you will find the Caves of the King, a sacred site in pre-Hispanic times which contains cave paintings. The landscape of the area features forests of Canary Islands pine and almond trees.

Then we'll head to Artenara. Almost the entire municipality of Artenara forms part of the Tamadaba Nature Reserve. In this setting framed by the massifs of Altavista and Tamada stands the Tejeda Crater, the biggest volcanic basin on the island. Outstanding in the town is the hermitage of the Virgen de La Cueva and the surrounding area, in which there are major archaeological sites. The inhabitants still make ceramics, which means the local handicrafts are another of the area's tourist attractions.

After a break for lunch, we'll visit Teror, an important centre of religion and pilgrimage. The faithful from the entire Canary Islands archipelago come to this place to worship the patron of the diocese, the Virgen del Pino. The festival in her honour is held every September

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with a traditional pilgrimage and popular dances. A tour of the historic quarter of the town lets you see religious buildings and ancestral homes which have sprung up around the sanctuary of the Virgin.

This evening we fly to Cape Verde.

Overnight in Santa Maria, Sal

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Sal Island Exploration

Cape Verde is an archipelago of volcanic islands, its dramatic landscapes shaped by ancient eruptions that left behind rugged peaks, barren lava fields, and deep, weathered craters. The islands bear the indelible mark of both African traditions and Portuguese colonial influence, a synthesis reflected in its Creole language, soulful morna music, and colourful local festivals. Historically, Cape Verde served as a vital maritime crossroads for explorers like Columbus and Da Gama and as a poignant waypoint in the transatlantic slave trade, events that have deeply influenced its collective memory. Its economy today rests on a balanced mix of tourism—with visitors drawn to its sunlit beaches and rich natural beauty—and traditional sectors such as fishing and artisanal craftwork. The Cape Verdean people, renowned for their warmth and the spirit of “morabeza,” embody a vibrant blend of cultures forged by centuries of migration and intermingling between West African roots and European heritage.

Sal Island, one of Cape Verde’s most intriguing islands, reveals its volcanic heritage through a rugged, arid interior marked by weathered lava fields and the remarkable Pedra de Lume salt pans nestled within an extinct crater. The island’s natural landscape is a study in contrasts, where barren, desert-like expanses give way to miles of soft white sand beaches bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. Local culture is a rich tapestry woven from African traditions and Portuguese colonial influences, evident in the hand-painted houses, folk music, and communal festivals that punctuate everyday life. In the island’s kitchens, freshly caught seafood is often transformed into comforting dishes like cachupa—a slow-cooked stew of corn, beans, and meats—while the distinctive grogue, a locally distilled sugarcane spirit, reflects a long tradition of small-scale agriculture; meanwhile, the economy remains anchored in both tourism and time-honoured practices such as fishing and artisanal salt production

Our sightseeing day begins later after our late arrival into Sal with a visit to the lively town centre of Espargos, where local markets and colourful streets offer a genuine glimpse of island life. We visit the iconic salt pans of Pedra de Lume, nestled in the crater of an ancient volcano, and to get an understanding of the age-old salt extraction techniques. Later, we journey to the bustling fishing port of Palmeira to soak in all of the activity.

Overnight in Santa Maria, Sal Island

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Fly to Praia, Santiago Island: Cooking Class

This morning we fly to the island of Santiago (likely via a connection on Sao Vicente island).

With the nation's capital of Cidade de Praia (Praia for short), Santiago Island, the largest of the Cape Verde islands, has had a strong influence on the history of the entire archipelago. More than half of the Cape Verdeans now live on Santiago. With an area of 990 sq. kilometres, Santiago is probably the most diverse island in terms of its landscape, where one can find fine sand beaches, craggy mountains, dry steppe grasslands, as well as fertile valleys and plateaux. Cape Verde has been very strongly influenced by West Africa in terms of its culture; it was the centre for the international slave trade with the neighbouring continent for many years.

This afternoon we participate in an engaging cooking class that introduces you to Cape Verdean culinary traditions—learning to prepare classic dishes that blend African, Portuguese, and Brazilian influences.

Overnight in Praia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Santiago Island Tour

Today we begin our Santiago island tour with a visit to Assomada, the island's second-largest city and a vibrant hub of African culture. Once a key trading post during the colonial era, Assomada's lively markets and bustling streets echo centuries of cultural exchange and resilience, offering a glimpse into the island's multifaceted past.

As we leave Assomada behind, the road ascends into the rugged landscapes that speak of Santiago's volcanic origins. The island's dramatic terrain—marked by ancient lava flows and eroded volcanic cones—tells a geological story that spans millennia.

Continuing our drive toward Tarrafal on the northern coast, a series of scenic viewpoints await. One of the highlights is the National Park Serra Malagueta. This protected area not only shelters an astonishing array of biodiversity but also offers panoramic vistas over the island's diverse ecosystems. The park's steep ridges and deep valleys, carved by both volcanic forces and the steady hand of erosion, create a natural canvas that is as informative as it is inspirational—a living record of Santiago's dynamic earth history and its ongoing evolution.

Finally, we drive to Tarrafal, a small fishing village in the north of Santiago Island with its own pretty little bay lined with palms. More infamously, Tarrafal was the site of the Campo da Morte Lenta – “Camp of the Slow Death” – a prison camp in the Portuguese colony of Cape Verde, set up by the dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936), where opponents of his right-wing authoritarian regime were sent. We return to Praia along the east coast of the island for a late dinner.

Overnight in Praia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Praia, Santiago - Fly to Fogo Island

With its roughly 100,000 inhabitants, the capital of Praia is the government and economic centre of the country. The core of the old town, built on a plateau, has magnificent houses from the colonial era. This morning we will visit the historical part of the town, the Plateau. We'll also include trip to Sokupira and its local market, and visit the Ethnographic Museum.

Later we transfer to the airport for our flight to Fogo Island and check-in to our hotel.

Fogo was the second island in the archipelago to be populated, after Santiago (then São Tiago). Initially, the island's cash crop was cotton, picked by slaves from Angola. A fiery eruption in 1688 caused a majority of the inhabitants to leave for nearby Brava, another of the Cape Verdean islands. From 1785 on, whaling ships from Brockton and New Bedford, Massachusetts came to replenish their ships and recruit crews. The departure of these Americanos marks the beginning of the Cape Verdean diaspora. Not everyone left Fogo, however. In 1870, the eccentric Count of Montrond (France) stopped on the island en route to Brazil, or so he thought. He stayed, and brought with him the vines that kicked off wine production. Many of the inhabitants of Chã (which we'll visit tomorrow), with their light skin, blond hair, and blue eyes, trace their ancestry back to the biologically prolific Count.

Overnight in Sao Filipe, Fogo Island.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Fogo & Cha das Caldeiras

In the early morning we will start our tour up into the Chã das Caldeiras, where you will have the opportunity to walk on the lava fields and enjoy the stunning view on the majestic Pico Grande. Chã das Caldeiras (“Plain or Plateau of the Calderas”) is actually a small community of approximately 1,000 inhabitants within the crater of the volcano; the entire caldera, some 67 km², is a protected area as part of the Fogo Natural Park (Parque Natural do Fogo), a cooperative effort between the German and Cape Verdean governments. We will see the fresh and almost dried-out lava of the eruption of November 2014; after taking some impressive pictures in the countryside we enjoy lunch at a family's home.

After lunch, we will visit a winery and taste the well-known Cha wine. The manager of the “Adega” has a nice garden behind his house that we will visit before travelling back to Sao Filipe.

Overnight in Sao Filipe, Fogo Island.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 20 Fogo - Fly to Praia, Santiago Island

This morning we have a sightseeing tour of Sao Filipe that includes a visit to the Casa da Memoria. Casa da Memória is a cultural centre and museum in the historic centre, founded 20 years ago by two inspiring women, Monique and Gilda, to preserve and showcase everyday objects, documents, and personal treasures that embody Cape Verde's rich history. The museum not only makes local history accessible to visitors and younger generations but also houses a unique library and special collections that reflect Fogo's heritage. Additionally, Casa da Memória serves as a vibrant meeting place for cultural events and discussions, fostering intergenerational dialogue and ensuring that the island's history is kept alive for everyone.

We will also see the Praça de Presídio – the site of the annual São Filipe Festa and Festa de Bandeira, where organized parades and public celebrations highlight the community's long-standing traditions. Nearby, the old cemetery provides a straightforward insight into local customs regarding death and remembrance, with its aged tombstones and maintained memorials illustrating how historical influences and indigenous practices have shaped the rituals marking the end of life.

Later in the day, we fly back to Praia and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in Praia, Santiago Island.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Cidade Velha Sightseeing - Depart

Today's morning tour takes us north to see Cidade da Ribeira Grande de Santiago, the former capital of Santiago (previously called Cidade Velha), which was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2009. The city is overlooked by a fortress, Fortaleza Real de Sao Felipe, which serves as a reminder of Portuguese colonial rule. The romantic little houses of Rua Banana also display architecture typical of Portugal, were rebuilt true to the original within the scope of a UNESCO project. The fact the Cidade de Santiago was the centre of the international slave trade during its heyday when it was still called Ribeira Grande, is attested to by the pillory (Pelourinho), an obelisk close to the city centre.

The Nossa Senhora do Rosario church, whose construction began in 1495, is located above the northern part of Rua Banana. With its baptismal of alabaster, it's the oldest colonial church in the world. The floral motifs in stone in the latticework vault of the chapel are evidence of Moorish influences, as are the numerous azulejos (painted tiles).

We then return to the hotel for the balance of the day/evening before transferring to the airport for your flight home (rooms have been reserved until the 7th).

VIAGEM BOA!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner