

DIVING GUIDE

90 OF THE BEST DIVING SITES



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90 OF THE BEST DIVING SITES

FAIAL · GRACIOSA · PICO · SÃO JORGE · TERCEIRA · CORVO · FLORES · SANTA MARIA · SÃO MIGUEL

Dear diving lovers,

The Regional Association of Tourism has, since its beginning, worked on the promotion of touristic products that best characterize the Autonomous Regional of the Azores as an ideal destination for active ecotourism.

Among the various touristic products existing in the region, diving is undoubtedly one of those that have evolved and affirmed itself for its natural characteristics. The proof that this bet was correct resides in the return that has been verified by the rise in the number of divers, as well as the visitors who come specifically to dive in this region.

The present publication arises as another initiative in the promotion of diving in the Azores, giving the due recognition to the ocean that surrounds this archipelago for its innumerable diving spots that can be visited by all lovers of this activity. This guide is also intended to orient the esteemed reader in his or her choice of islands to visit and places to dive, according to one's preferences and tastes. Still, we strongly recommend contact with the local scuba-diving centers that will be able to suggest even more diving sites, dispersed throughout the entire region.

Diving in the Azorean ocean has revealed itself as an unmatched experience for many, whether it is for the rocky formations of volcanic origin along the coast, the wealth of fauna and flora, the archaeological sites that are a result of the embarkations have sunken since man arrived here in the 15th century, as well as for the underwater banks that are full of life. Even more, the intense and crystalline blue of the waters of the Azores, the unexpected encounters with marine beings passing through the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the largest schools of fish, manta rays, sharks, and other forms of life, should too be emphasized.

To all the readers of the Diving Guide of the Azores,

Happy Diving!

Sandro Paim

President of the Regional Association of Tourism



AZORES . PORTUGAL

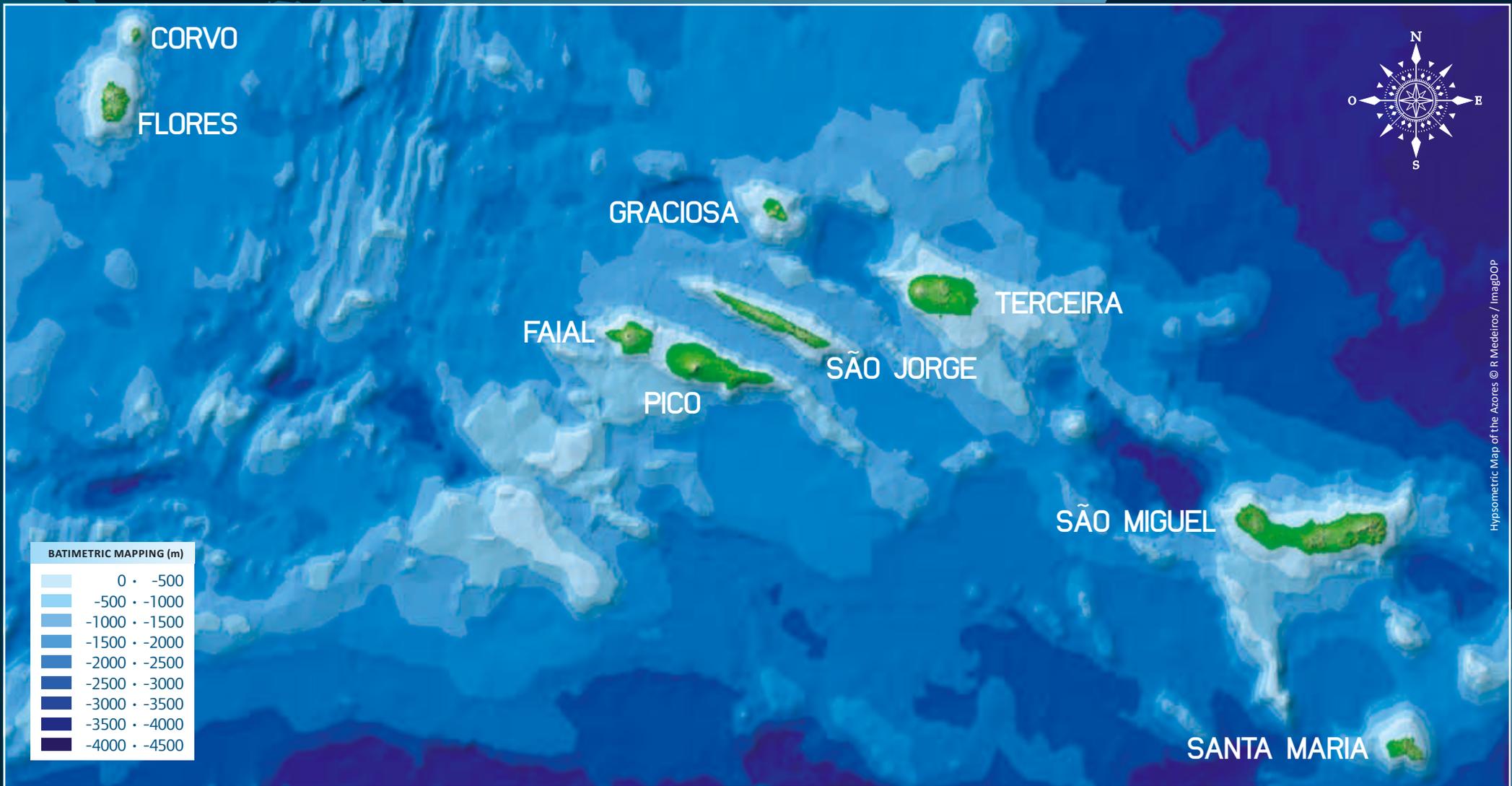
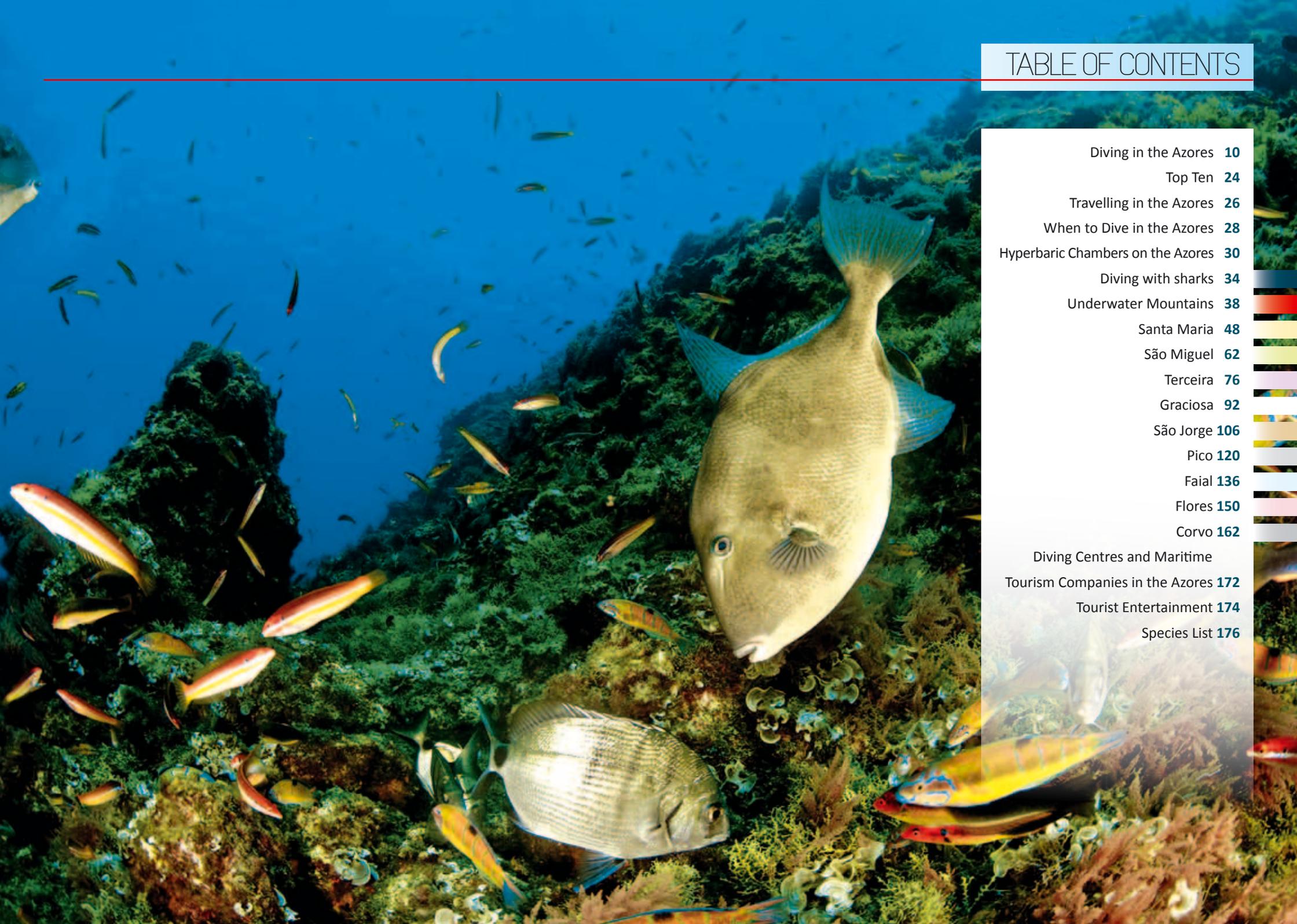


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DIVING IN THE AZORES

The archipelago of the Azores lies right in the heart of the North Atlantic Ocean. Just a couple of hours away from mainland Europe, the nine islands of this archipelago spread through a vast maritime area, are alive with diverse diving spots and a rich and bountiful marine life.

Being located right in the Atlantic Ocean makes these islands a true oasis for a vast number of marine species. With its unique and rich marine biodiversity, its waters teem with more than 24 types of cetaceans, 5 species of sea turtles and more than 600 species of fish, including large shoals of pelagic fish, gracious Chilean devil ray and affable Dusky grouper.

The extreme beauty of these islands, so diverse between them, their crystal clear waters with a singular tone of colour and their warm waters and moderate temperatures, make the Azores a unique diving destination, an European paradise in the Atlantic Ocean.

Nine islands make up the archipelago and they are divided into three separate groups. The Eastern Group (São Miguel and Santa Maria Islands) is closer to the European continent; the Central Group, is the most numerous with the islands of Fayal, São Jorge, Pico, Graciosa and Terceira; and the Western Group, Europe's westernmost point comprises the islands of Flores and Corvo;



The various islands of the Azores bear witness to their volcanic origin, with varied physiographic bottoms at their shores creating an added geological focal point to the diving spots.

Along the shores and on less deeper areas there are various interesting rocky formations, such as tunnels, caves and caverns. Their origins take us back to the times of creation of these islands when the lavic flows got in touch with the ocean waters, rapidly solidifying but keeping the lava flow inside. On the other hand, the erosion of softer materials on these lavic flows has created, perhaps the most surprising scenery of the Azorean sea bottom for any diver - imposing marine arches.

Close to the shore, there are volcanic hills that have created coastal bottoms, just a few meters below surface, at depths of around

50 to 100 metres. This enables the sighting on those areas of ocean species such as large pelagic fish or even Chilean devil rays and a vast array of more common fish.

At large distance from the archipelago's shores there are volcanic peaks, the so-called submarine mountains emerging from great oceanic depths of up to 500 metres and almost rising to the surface. These spots, when accessible for diving, as is the case with Princess Alice Bank, Dom João de Castro Bank, Formigas and Dollabarat (Pgs. 40, 42, 44 and 46), provide a unique diversity of marine ecosystems, ranging from the most common species in the Azorean sea bottom to large shoals of pelagic fish, dozens of gracious Chilean devil ray and even some cetaceans.

The exuberant sea life available for the diver is more than rocky formations,



coastal bottoms and submarine mountains. For centuries, its localisation at the heart of the Atlantic Ocean has made the Azores a true crossing point for all maritime transatlantic routes.

At Terceira Island, Angra Bay acquired a strategic relevance during the 1500s, after the Discovery of the Maritime Way to India and America, becoming for more than four centuries, a major shelter harbour in the archipelago. Many testimonials of the historical relevance of this harbour are yet to be unveiled. Historic data points out to more than 70 ships sunk in its harbour since 1552, of which a majority is yet to be found.

Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*)



Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)



Luminescent jellyfish (*Pelagia noctiluca*)

At Angra do Heroísmo Bay we can find the Subaquatic Archaeological Park of Angra Bay, a park made up of various archaeological sites, some already studied and others yet awaiting its turn. A real subaquatic museum open to the divers and attesting to the strategic relevance of Angra do Heroísmo throughout the centuries. The Anchor Graveyard has more than 40 anchors, from the 16th to the 20th century, at a depth of between 15 and 35 metres. This Graveyard coupled with the shipwreck of the steamboat Lidador that sunk on this spot on 1878 are, indeed, two

Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*)



São Miguel Island, *Dori*

diving spots that deserve the divers' attention on this bay.

Apart from archaeological dives at Terceira Island, it is also possible to find similar archaeological remnants on the other islands of the archipelago. That is the case of a dive called "Cannons between mountains" at Fayal island (pág 143), where one can observe many cannons and other historical artefacts taken from the Horta Harbour. Subsequently, they were placed at this spot to avoid their destruction at the time the harbour was being enlarged.

For the recreational diver, however, the most interesting shipwrecks will typically be the most recent, namely from the 20th century (or even, in some cases, from the end of the 19th century), whose metallic structure remains intact and offers a captivating subaquatic landscape. The archipelago offers various examples that are visited regularly by divers: the *Terceirense* in Graciosa, the *Lidador* in Terceira, the *Olímpia* in the Formigas, the *Slavónia* in Flores, the *Dori* in São Miguel, among many others that are lesser known or that have had their metallic structure reduced by the force of the Azorean sea, making it difficult for the diver to identify them as ships.

During any dive at every island in the Azores, it is hard to determine to what species or group we should pay more attention. The rocky bottom is covered with an enormous variety of bony fish, common in almost every diving spot. One can find the colourful Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma Pavo*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsel (*Abudefduf luridus*), as well



Terceira Island, *Lidador*

as the more lonesome Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Axillary wrasse (*Symphodus mediterraneus*), Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*) and Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*). The most wished for encounters with large-sized species near the bottom, such as the peculiar Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus margina-*

Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*)



Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*)

Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

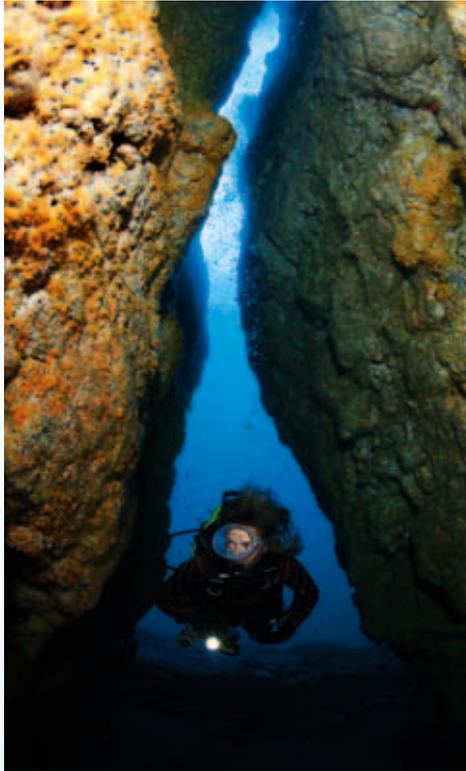
tus), Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and the colourful Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*) are normally more common at a greater depth, 20 metres or more, when the Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) branches are also quite common. A diver should not focus on these smaller fish or on the little nudibranchs, morays and octopuses amongst the rocks. There is a

risk of, sometimes, not noticing the large shoals of pelagic fish such as Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*), Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*), Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*) or, for the luckier, a majestic Chilean devil ray, a turtle or an Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*) calmly passing by on the water column.



Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*)

Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*)



On the other hand, the Azores are now highly sought out by divers who visit these islands looking specifically for some of the most intense experiences that the Oceans have to offer. Today, diving with various shark species is one of the principal touristic highlights of the region. Diving with species such as the Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) and the shortfin Mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), possible in remote seamounts, is one of the most intense subaquatic experiences that the region offers and has quickly made the Azores known as one of the best regions on the planet for this activity. The world's biggest fish, the Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), is also frequently spotted in Azorean waters, especially near the island of Santa Maria, but also periodically close to other islands and seamounts.



Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*)



Hermit crab (*Pagurus sp.*)



Nudibranch - Zebra Doris (*Hypselerodis picta azorica*)

Nudibranch (*Felimida britoi*)



Fire worm (*Hermodice carunculata*)

TOP TEN

The “Diving Guide of the Azores” intends to serve as an essential tool so that a diver who visits the nine islands of the Azores is informed of the different diving locales that he or she will be able to visit in each of the islands of the Azorean archipelago.

While more than 90 diving spots are described throughout this guide, the TOP TEN list intends to highlight those dives that stand out for their exceptional wealth of marine life, unique scenic beauty, or historic and cultural importance, making them “must-see dives.”

Ambrósio
Santa Maria (Pg 52)



Banco D. João de Castro
(D. João de Castro bank) Terceira (Pg 40)



Caneiro dos meros
Corvo (Pg 168)



Banco Princesa Alice
(Princesa Alice bank) Pico or Faial (Pg 46)



Baixa dos Rosais
São Jorge (Pg 111)



Naufágio Dori
São Miguel (Pg 72)



Dive with blue sharks
(Pg 33)



Formigas and Dollabarát
Santa Maria or São Miguel (Pg 42 and 44)



Gruta dos Camarões
Faial (Pg 146)



Naufágio - Terceirense
Graciosa (Pg 104)



TRAVELLING IN THE AZORES

The Azores archipelago has quite an efficient and diversified transport system, which enables the diver to enjoy his/her stay in the Azores and to have unique experiences in any of those islands.

All year-round airline connections between mainland Portugal and the Archipelago, as well as between all islands of the Azores, are run by the SATA and TAP airlines.

Due to the great distances that may exist between some islands of the Azores, this solution will likely be the most practical for divers who wish to dive in different islands that do not belong to the same group (Eastern, Central, or Western). On the other hand, the maritime connection is quite quick and efficient between the islands of the same group.

Maritime transport between the islands is done by Transmaçor and Atlânticoline. The only islands with all year-round maritime links are the so-called "Triangle Islands" - Pico - Fayal - São Jorge Islands, served by the Transmaçor boat service. During the summer season, from May until October, the Atlânticoline boats operate services between all islands, while Transmaçor reinforces travel links in the Triangle and creates a new boat service to Terceira Island.

Beyond these regular services, various maritime-touristic enterprises offer the "Sea Taxi" service between islands of the same group for those who prefer a different experience. This is an option that offers the opportunity to enjoy a more personalized service, especially preferred by small groups. More information can be found at: www.artazores.com and www.visitazores.com



<http://www.transmacor.pt>



<http://www.atlanticoline.pt/>



www.sata.pt



www.tap.pt

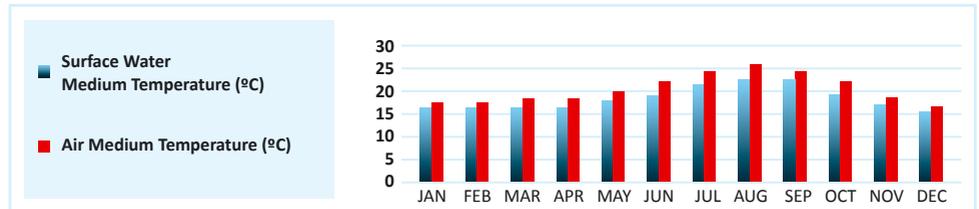
WHEN TO DIVE IN THE AZORES

Due to the geographic location of the Archipelago on the moderate zone of the northern hemisphere, this group of islands benefits from an all year-round moderate climate, albeit with high levels of humidity and rainfall. Cloudy skies and rain are possible throughout the year, but, typically, July and August have more sunny days and higher temperatures.

The average air temperatures range 10°C, between winter and summer, from a minimum of 16 °C to a maximum of 26 °C, although the peak of the maximum temperature can reach 28 °C - 30 °C. The softening influence of the eastern branches of the Gulf Stream provide a more constant sea temperature, ranging only 6 °C between average temperatures of 16 °C - 22 °C, and reaching peaks of maximum temperature at 24 °C - 25 °C.

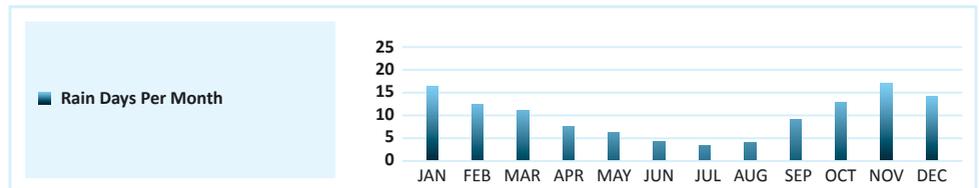
Wind direction and intensity are fairly diverse throughout the year; however, the predominant winds are from North during summer, when they are more moderate.

The best season for diving is during the summer months, between June and September, thanks to the combination of various climatic factors (higher air and water temperatures, larger sunny periods, less rainfall and softer winds) as well as more clear waters and a higher number of pelagic specimens.



Recommended Diving dress wear:

June to October – wetsuit or semi dry 5 mm/7 mm _ November to May – wetsuit or semi dry 7 mm/10 mm.



Source: Project CLIMAAT

HYPERBARIC CHAMBERS IN THE AZORES

The Central Group of islands of the Azores archipelago is equipped with an operational Hyperbaric Chamber located at Fayal Island. It is also used by all other four islands of the Central Group. A hyperbaric chamber also exists on the island of São Miguel, in the eastern group of the archipelago, which also serves the island of Santa Maria.

EMERGENCY CALL NUMBER: 112

Distance of hyperbaric chambers to the closest islands (Hyperbaric Chamber of the island of Flores (pg.153))

	DISTANCE	ISLAND
Hyperbaric Chamber of Fayal Island Status – Operational Hospital da Horta Estrada Príncipe Alberto do Mónaco 9900-038 Horta, Faial Azores, Portugal Tel. (+351) 292 201 000	4.5 Nautical miles (Sea rescue)	Pico
	20 Nautical miles (Sea rescue)	São Jorge
	46 Nautical miles (Sea/Air rescue)	Graciosa
	70 Nautical miles (Sea/Air rescue)	Terceira
	130 Nautical miles (Air rescue)	Flores
	134 Nautical miles (Air rescue)	Corvo

	DISTANCE	ISLAND
Hyperbaric chamber of the island of São Miguel Status – Operational Hospital do Divino Espírito Santo Rua da Grotinha 9500-370 Ponta Delgada Açores, Portugal Tel. (+351) 292 203 000	57 Nautical miles (Sea/Air rescue)	Santa Maria

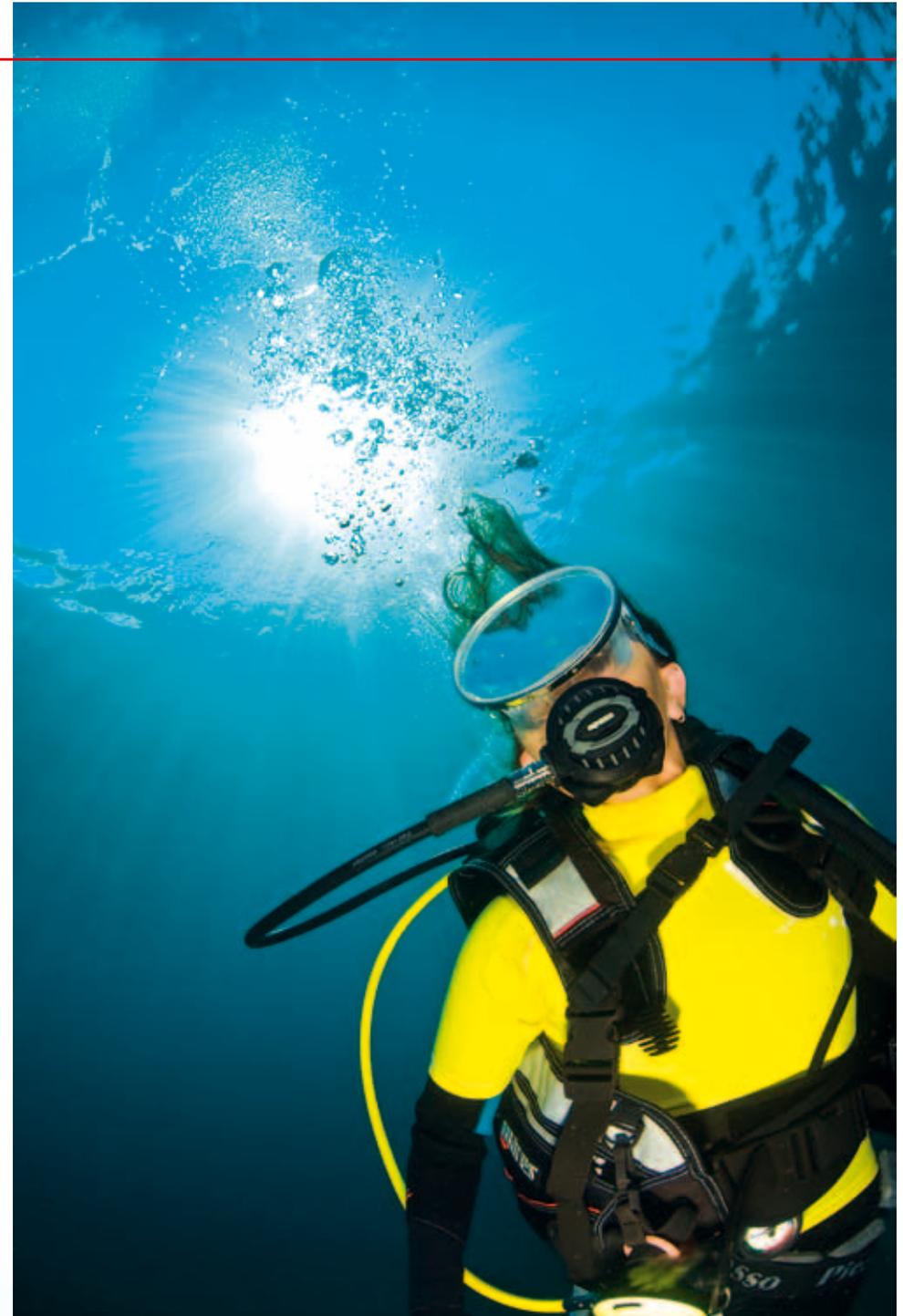
Emergency Procedures in case of decompression accident (free bends decompression sickness also colloquially known as divers' disease, the bends or caisson disease):

If the victim is conscious:

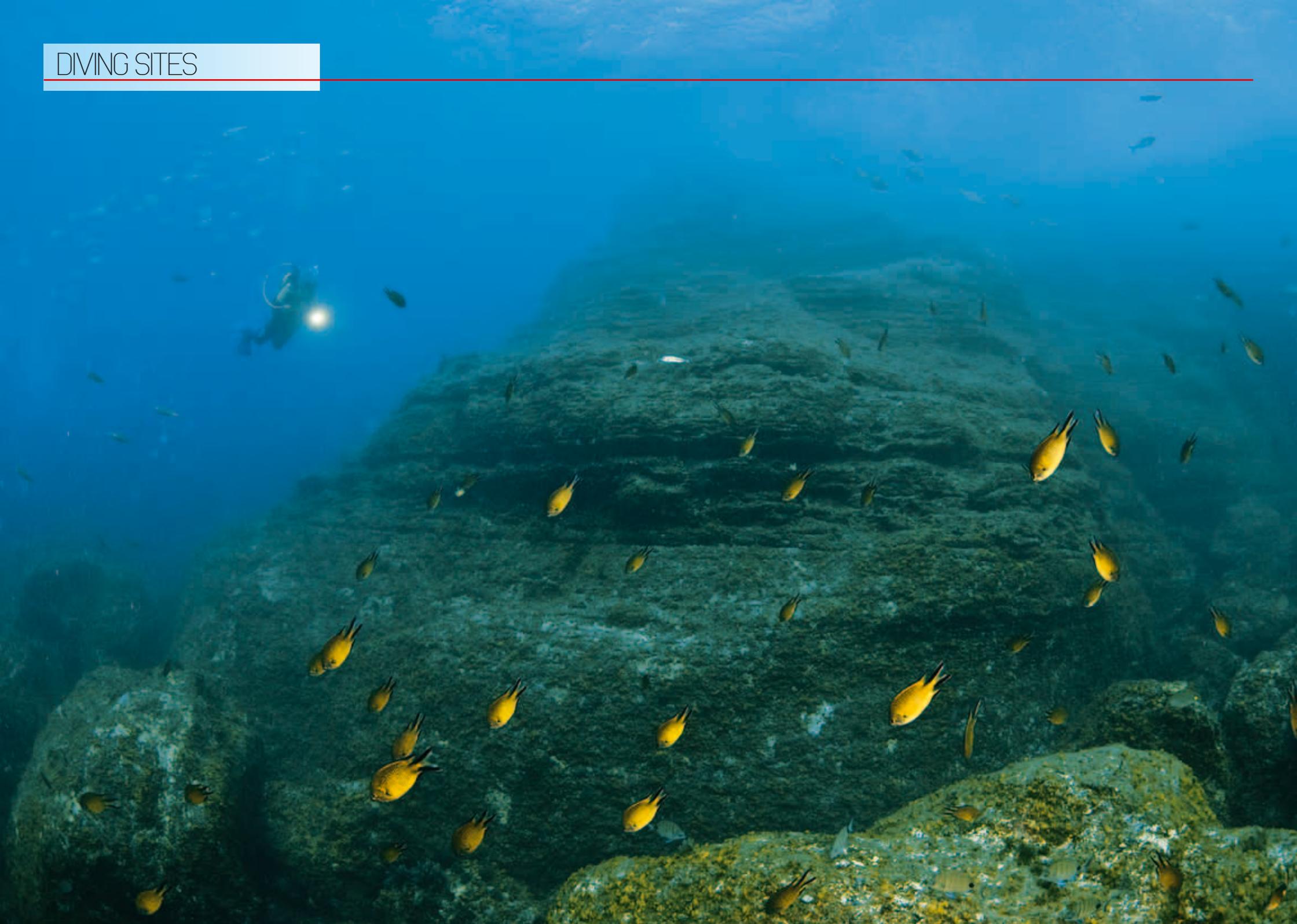
- Whenever possible proceed with oral administration of water.
- Supply 100-per cent oxygen at a flow rate of 15 l. /min.
- Without interrupting the flow of oxygen prepare the transference of the diver to the nearest hyperbaric chamber, in a horizontal position.

If the victim is unconscious:

- Use the Basic Life Support procedures.
- Supply 100-per cent oxygen at a flow rate of 15 l. /min.
- Without interrupting the flow of oxygen prepare the transference of the diver to the nearest hyperbaric chamber, in a safety lateral position.



DIVING SITES



DIVING WITH SHARKS



Its location in the Northern Atlantic Ocean, in a zone of transition between the nutrient-rich currents coming from the north and the warm waters of the Gulf current, makes this group of islands an authentic sanctuary for a large and varied number of marine species. Bestowed with a unique marine wealth and diversity, various shark species exist in the waters of the Azores, especially in more remote spots, such as the seamounts. Species such as the Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*), the Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), the shortfin Mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and even the world's largest fish, the Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), may be seen with regularity in specific locales of the archipelago.

Despite being possible to see, with some regularity, some of these species in diving spots whose objective is not specifically shark observation, for example the presence of the Galapagos sharks in the remote diving locations of Formigas and Dollabarat (pg. 42 and 44), there exist two must-have experiences in the Azores that, in general, only occur during dives undergone with this objective.

DIVING WITH BLUE SHARKS

The Azores are one of the few places in the world where it is possible to swim with one of the fastest fishes of the Oceans - the Blue Shark. Every year hundreds of divers from all over the world seek out these islands to have the pleasure of being in the same territory as this incredible predator who receives them in his habitat in a friendly manner, in what will be one of the diver's most incredible experiences in the middle of the sea.

Diving with blue sharks is possible in several islands of the archipelago. The location most visited and the cradle of this activity, however, is the Condor seamount, located approximately 10 miles from the island of Faial and accessible from both this island and from the island of Pico. This is certainly one of the most intense experiences that a diver may have in the Azores, diving in "the blue," while agile, furtive shadows gain form, emerging from deep waters in direction of the surface.

Initially cautious, as trust is established these predators of the depths of the oceans become extremely



Blue shark (*Prionace Glauca*)

Whale shark (*Rhincodon Typus*)



curious, approaching and inspecting each diver with their keen senses. On a typical dive, we can count between 5 and 15 of these graceful sharks moving slowly amongst divers and around the boat. The luckier divers will even have the possibility to meet the fastest fish of the Oceans, the shortfin mako shark which, though rarer and often timid, exists in the same locations.

DIVING WITH WHALE SHARKS (ISLAND OF SANTA MARIA)

Diving with the biggest fish in the world in the crystalline waters of the Azores, surrounded by large tunas and innumerable other fish species that accompany these giants of the sea in their Atlantic crossings is, without a doubt, one of the best diving experiences that the Azores have to offer.

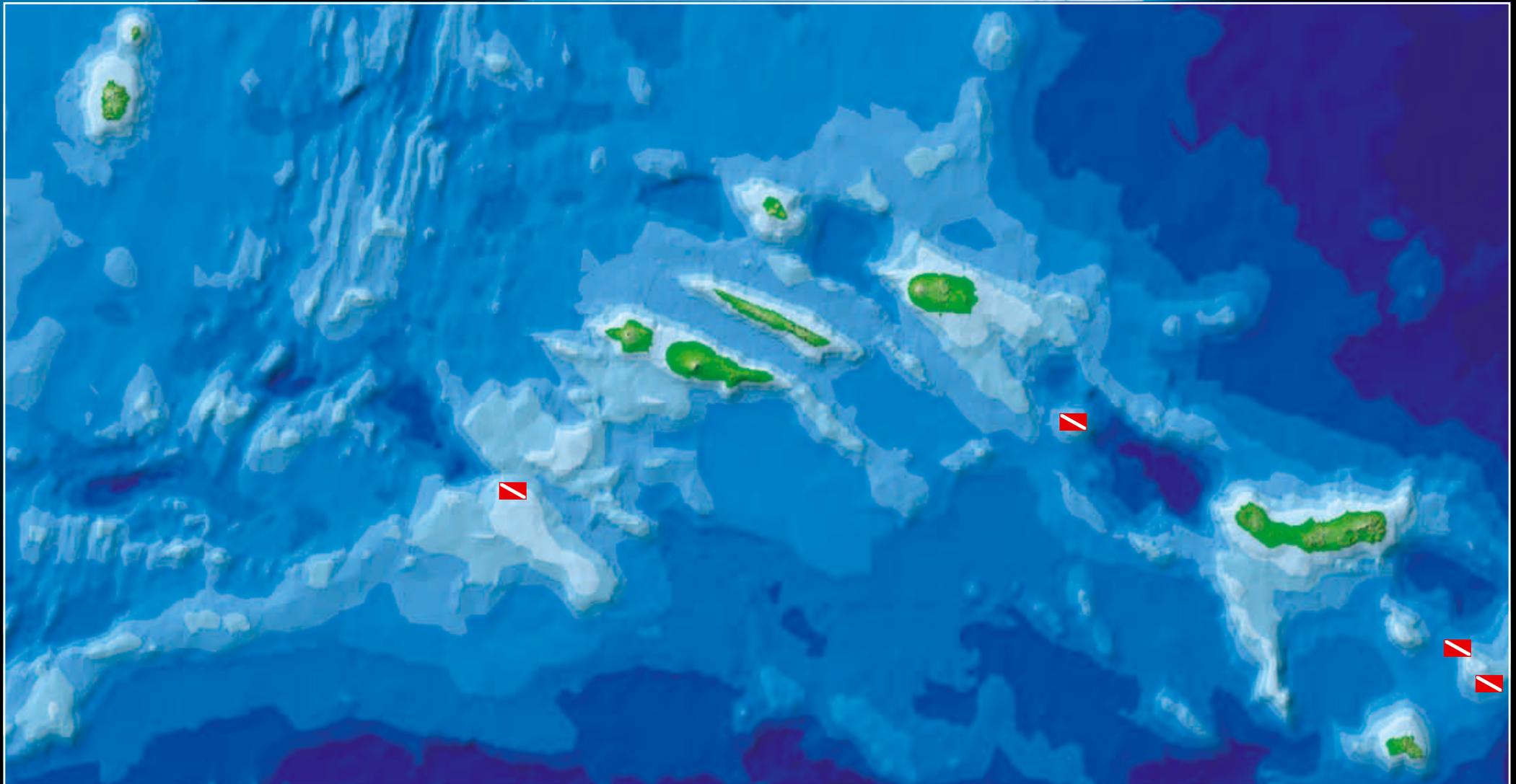
Although it is possible to spot whale sharks in various islands of the Azores and they are often observed in places such as the Princesa Alice seamount (pg. 46), Santa Maria is, without a doubt, the island most visited by this colossal sea animal. This activity happens in international waters, far from the tranquil beaches of this small island, though it is possible to sometimes see whale sharks close to the shore on coastal dives.

Snorkeling in the blue waters of the Azores, with a fish that often exceeds 10 meters in length swimming leisurely around the divers, does not end with the sighting of the whale shark. Many times, this shark comes accompanied by a school of thousands of tunas, as well as pilot fish and innumerable other pelagic fish.

Being that the search for whale sharks occurs relatively far from the coast, a typical outing to snorkel with whale sharks often has other surprises in store for the divers, such as turtles and various dolphin species that migrate annually to the warm waters of the Azores.

UNDERWATER MOUNTAINS

- ▣ Banco Dom João de Castro (40)
- ▣ Banco Dollabarat (42)
- ▣ Ilhéus das Formigas (44)
- ▣ Princesa Alice (46)



BANCO D JOÃO DE CASTRO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 hours.

Depth: 13m (mín.), >30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



At 35 nautical miles from Terceira Island, we find the most coveted, least accessible and least patronised diving spots on the archipelago of the Azores, the Dom João de Castro Bank.

The Dom João de Castro Bank is a large submarine volcano, emerging from around a depth of 1,000 metres up to a minimum of 13 metres. The summit of this submarine mountain may have created a new island on this spot, albeit for a short period. The last submarine eruption of the Dom João de Castro Bank occurred in December 1720, originating a small island with approximately 1.5 km in diameter and a height of 250 metres. However the marine erosion quickly reduced it and there are reports that it disappeared two years later. Doubts about the existence of an old island or a reef resulting from it have subsisted however, for about 200 years, until the hydrographical ship “Dom João de Castro” discovered the bank in 1941.

The Dom João de Castro Bank is seismically and volcanically very active with quite obvious manifestations of secondary forms of volcanism such as submarine thermal springs and numerous fumaroles. This spot has an extremely varied and abundant marine life. It becomes even more interesting since the dive is on the upper extremity of an old Caldera. It is surrounded by some vertical walls where there are volcanic faults through which are liberated hot gases as “curtains” of small air bubbles.

Its bottom is characterised by four peaks that project from the base of the crater’s cone, between 40 and 50 metres depth. The peak where we start the dive reaches a minimum depth of 13 metres.

Apart from a unique scenery in the midst of extremely clear waters filled up with small air bubbles, this spot is known as one of the best spots on the archipelago for the observation of large shoals of large-dimension pelagic fish. It is usual to sight considerably sized Jacks (*Seriola* spp.), Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*), Bermuda sea chub (*Kyphosus sectator*) and even the imposing Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) patrolling the top of the reef close to the surface.

Although the bottom is overabundant with common species of the Azores sea, the diver’s attention shall, certainly, focus on the unique vulcanological phenomena, large shoals of pelagic and even the presence of species more difficult to observe on other diving spots, such as Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) and Loggerhead sea turtle (i.e. *Caretta caretta*).

This dive is considered by many as one of the best in the archipelago. Apart from the observation of pelagic fish and the hydrothermal activity, it provides a unique opportunity to spend many hours travelling across the Azorean seas, where the encounters with various species of cetaceans, sea birds and turtles are constant.

Due to its localisation and low depths, this dive is quite often affected by strong sea currents being advised to do the dive when there is slack tide, when there are excellent marine conditions and only with experienced divers.

Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capricus*)



Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*)



SPECIES SIGHTED:

Fauna:

Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*)
Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)
Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*)
Skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)
Atlantic Bonito (*Sarda sarda*)
Jacks (*Seriola* spp.)
Bermuda sea chub (*Kyphosus sectator*)
Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capricus*)

BANCO DOLLABARAT

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 1.5-2.5 hours.

Depth: 5m (mín.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The *Dollabarát* seamount is situated approximately 20 nautical miles to the northeast of Santa Maria, 33 nautical miles from the southeast of São Miguel, and only 3 nautical miles from the Formigas islets, both marine reservation sites where fishing is not permitted. Its designation comes from the name of a Basque commander, Pierre Dollabarát, who was the first to signal the existence of this bank.

Due to its remote location and the possibility that strong sea currents occur, this dive requires a higher experience level of the diver, and is only visited in favorable sea conditions.

The most shallow point is located at 5 meters of depth, while various, extensive zones exist with depths that vary between 8 and 15 meters, abruptly dropping to depths greater than 30 to 50 meters in the extremities.

As a result of low depths of this bank, it is possible, as soon as embarkation, to see the seafloor covered with animal life and, many times, the greenish shadows of the manta rays skimming the shallow zones on the days when the sea is calm.

During this fantastic dive where visibility rules, one can observe an enormous diversity of species, many of which are in decline in other areas of the world and especially in the Atlantic. Between the cracks in rocks, one may find various eel species and fish of even greater size such as the large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*), and Barred hogfishes (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*) that hide away in the gorges.

As in the Formigas islets, the greatest attraction of this diving spot is the possibility of encounters with large pelagic species. Under the abyss that surround the crown, a great variety of clusters of large species, such as Amberjacks of exceptional dimensions, as well as Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), migratory pelagic species, such as the Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), the Shipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), and the Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*). Many times, between the schools of swift fish, groups of box rays, Manta rays (*Manta birostris*), and some shark species, such as the Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*) and the Smooth hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*), will slowly circulate.

Due to the conditions of exceptional visibility and to its variety of fauna, which ranges between the small, more common species to the large, pelagic species, without forgetting the manta rays and sharks, the *Dollabarát* bank, along with the Formigas islets, is one of the best diving spots in the Archipelago of the Azores.

Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)



Jacks (*Seriola* spp.)



SPECIES SIGHTED:

Fauna:

Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*)
Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)
Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*)
Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*)
Jacks (*Seriola* spp.)
Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)
Bermuda sea chub (*Kyphosus sectatrix*)
Derbio (*Trachinotus ovatus*)

ILHÉUS DAS FORMIGAS

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: By boat, about 1.5 hours from Santa Maria and approximately 2.5 hours from the island of São Miguel.
Depth: >50m (máx).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Long known for unique dives and encounters with large pelagic species, the small group of the Formiga islets is situated between the island of São Miguel and the island of Santa Maria. Just 165 meters in length and 11 in height, marked by a small lighthouse, the islets are 33 nautical miles from the southeast point of São Miguel and 20 nautical miles from the Northeast point of Santa Maria. Its proximity to the Dollabarot seamount leads most divers to opt to dive in each of these locations, both zones being a marine reserve where fishing is not permitted.

Due to its remote localization and the possibility of strong oceanic currents, this diving spot requires an elevated level of experiences from the divers, and is only visited in favorable sea conditions.

Various diving spots exist around the Formigas Islets. Although the most frequented spots vary in accordance with each diving center, the most well known are: the eastern wall and the northern point of the islets, known as passageways for large groups of pelagic fish; a small, 8 meter-deep drop, located about 50 meters south of the islets known as a path for Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*); and the location of the “Olympia” shipwreck in the southwest zone, located at a depth of between 30-50 meters.

Upon arrival to the locale, still onboard the vessel, the crystalline waters known for offering the best conditions of visibility in the archipelago make it possible to view fascinating clusters of fish. One may spot schools of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*), Jacks (*Seriola* spp.), and Bermuda sea chubs (*Kyphosus spectator*), which reach great dimensions in this area,

Close to the surface and until 10 meters of depth, the bottom is, in some zones, covered by the brown algae *Cystoseira*, only known in the archipelagos of Micronesia. Above the algae carpets, you can find true clouds of color made up of small fish, like the Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), the Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), as well as the Emerald wrasse (*Centrolabrus trutta*).

The sea bottom, characterized by the large slopes and vertical walls, abruptly falls to depths greater than 60-70 meters in some locations, many times offering small platforms at 15-20 meters, the ideal depth at which to stop and observe the large schools of pelagic fish. Beginning at 15 meters of depth, there exist many cracks and gorges that shelter eels, large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*), and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*), in between large branches of the abundant Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*).

But what makes this spot unique and sought out by so many divers is, without a doubt, the observation of the great pelagic fish that pass through this oceanic paradise. The observation of large clusters of amberjacks of exceptional dimension, as well as Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), as well as schools of migratory pelagic fish, such as the Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), the Shipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), and the Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*). Many times, amidst the large clusters of speedy fish, groups of box rays and even colossal manta rays slowly circulate, as well as some shark species, such as Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*) and the Smooth hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*).

Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)

SPECIES SIGHTED:

Fauna:

Manta ray (*Manta birostris*)
Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)
Shark (ex: *Carcharhinus galapagensis* and *Sphyrna zygaena*)
Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyrna viridensis*)
Jacks (*Seriola* spp.)
Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*)
Bermuda sea chub (*Kyphosus spectator*)
Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

PRINCESA ALICE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 hours.

Depth: 35m (mín.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



What is probably, the most well-known diving spot of the Azores is located 45 nautical miles away from Fayal Island and 50 nautical miles from Pico Island, in one of the five major zones of fracture of the Mid Atlantic Ridge - the Princess Alice Bank. This submarine mountain is characterised by the existence of a considerable large area of minimum depths of 35-40 metres, surrounded by an area of more than 100 sq km with depths above 500 metres. Its name derives from an oceanographic campaign that took place in 1896, aboard the research ship "Princess Alice," led by Albert I, Prince of Monaco.

The trip to Princess Alice Bank takes approximately three hours, departing either from Horta's marina or from the town of Madalena. It provides unique moments with a magnificent landscape of the shores of Fayal and Pico Islands, together with the big chance of sighting various specimens of turtles, dolphins and whales. In terms of diving conditions, this is a spot known as being one of the best, or even the best, diving spot on the archipelago of the Azores. This almost legendary statute is due to the almost guaranteed presence of large groups of Chilean devil ray, gigantic shoals of pelagic fish and even the possibility of sighting various species of sharks, with a clear visibility that often surpasses 30-40 metres.

This spot is also known by its strong sea currents and that is why it is advisable to use a surface marker buoy, descending and ascending using the anchor cable. Upon arrival at the Princess Alice Bank, the boat is greeted by the green shadows of inquisitive Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) moving on the water surface, together with large shoals of Jacks (*Seriola* spp.) and Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*) that agitate the quiet surface of the waters. The bottom, located at 35 metres depth, has an extraordinarily abundant marine fauna, typical of the Azorean seas, such as the common Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*) and Moray among others. There is also a large quantity of species of bigger fish such as Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*).

However, it is on the water column, close to the surface, that we can see various types of pelagic species in large shoals, making this a unique diving spot in the Azores. Quite often, it is only necessary to stay hanging on to the anchor cable at a depth of 5 metres in order to observe groups of gracious Chilean devil ray. These are groups with more than 30 specimens swimming together. Also present are large shoals of Almaco jack, Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*) and other pelagic fish, even Manta ray (*Manta birostris*) and sharks such as the Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*).

Since this dive is far away from a sheltered harbour, amid strong sea currents and great depths, it is only advisable for experienced divers. However, less experienced divers or divers without any experience with scuba equipment may benefit from this unique diving experience through the apnoeic dive taking into consideration the abundance of marine life typically observed at the surface.

Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*)



Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)



SPECIES SIGHTED:

Fauna:

Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)
Common remora (*Remora remora*)
Jacks (*Seriola* spp.)
Atlantic Bonito (*Sarda sarda*)
Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyrna viridensis*)
Manta ray (*Manta birostris*)
Blue shark (ex: *Carcharhinus* spp., *Prionace glauca*)
Atlantic white marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*)

SANTA MARIA



- ▣ Ambrosio (52)
- ▣ Baixa da Maia (53)
- ▣ Baixa da Penedia (54)
- ▣ Baixa dos Badejos (55)
- ▣ Banco João Lopes (56)
- ▣ Gruta Azul (57)
- ▣ Gruta Funda (58)
- ▣ Ilhéu da Vila (59)
- ▣ Ilhéu das Lagoinhas (60)
- ▣ Pedrinha (61)



Known as the island of sun, the small island of Santa Maria, the southern-most of the archipelago, presents an area slightly more than 90km² and a population of approximately 5,547 habitants. Situated approximately 54 miles from the island of São Miguel, there are direct flights from São Miguel and from Lisbon, and maritime connections with São Miguel during the summer months.

It was in the Lugar dos Anjos on the island of Santa Maria that Christopher Columbus landed in the Azores for the first time, in 1493. Today, it is a swimming zone ideal for relaxation in the natural pools. Among its principal attractions there are the beautiful paradise-like beaches of white sand, with calm and crystalline waters that hug the ample bay on the southern coast of the island. In contrast to this landscape, we have the Bay of São Lourenço, on the northeastern point of the island: here, the limpid waters are surrounded by a steep slopes, covered with vineyards divided by stonewalls, providing a unique scenery on the archipelago. The zone of Maia is also widely known as a swimming zone bestowed with a large maritime pool surrounded by green slopes filled with vineyards where the majestic Maia lighthouse, of over 100 meters in height, stands out.

The capital of the island, Vila do Porto, is located at the top of a steep hill, encompassed by the forte of São Brás, a historic testament to the defense of the harbor of the first town in the Azores, against pirate and raider attacks. Today, the fort stands above the port and the marina of Vila do Porto.

This small island, until recently very little known by divers, quickly became sought out by divers from all over the world due to the abundance of marine species that we may find in its waters.

One of the most relevant factors for the growth of diving activity in this island is dependent on the fact that, during the summer months, Santa Maria is visited by the largest fish in the world, the whale shark. Although it is possible to see whale sharks on the other islands of the Azores from time to time, this giant of the seas is seen with greater frequency on this island.

Another must-see diving spot is the famous “Baixa do Ambrósio”(Pg 52). This is a one-of-a-kind location in the Azores since it is located only 3 miles from the coast and offers an abundance of life similar to that only offered in distant seamounts. Here, groups of up to dozens of curious manta rays, as well as clusters of large pelagic fish, are highlighted.

Santa Maria is also the departure point closest to two of the most famous offshore dives of the Azores: the Formigas islets and the Dollabarat seamount (Pg 42 and 44). Located about 20 miles of the southeastern point of the island of sun, these two locations are known for offering waters with the highest visibility in the Azores and encounters with large clusters of pelagic fish and manta rays.

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 40 minutes from the Marina of Vila do Porto.
Depth: 46m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ambrósio drop is surely the best-known diving spot on the island of Santa Maria and one of the most visited and sought after dives in the Azores. Located just 9 miles from the marina of Vila do Porto and 3 miles from the coast of the island of Santa Maria, this diving spot is a unique one in the archipelago due to the abundance and diversity of marine life that normally can only be found in the famous seamounts of the Azores, dozens of miles from the coast.

What makes this dive so coveted is surely the large groups of dozens of graceful mantas (*Mobula tarapacana*) that swim around the divers during the summer months. Due to the curiosity of these fantastic creatures, that can be seen in groups of up to 4 or 5 dozen, the majority of divers that visit this location opt to stay on the cape in low depths (between 5 and 15 meters), where schools of Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Jacks (*Seriola* spp.) and Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*), are a constant presence in this location.

The more experienced diver will be able to descend to the bottom, located at 46 meters, made up of a small platform of approximately 50 meters and bestowed with an exceptionally abundant life of large Round stringrays (*Taeniura grabata*) and Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*) above the bottom and large passerby fish such as Almaco jacks or even Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*).



Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from the marine of Vila do Porto.
Depth: 24m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa da Maia is made up of a small islet of about 10 meters located less than 500 meters from Maia and approximately 8 miles from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Fishing is prohibited on this islet and the surrounding zones (in a radius of 150 meters) due to its importance for diving on the island.

Subject to strong currents, this zone is sought out principally due to the possibility of encounters with clusters of pelagic fish that patrol the blue around the bottom. Species like clusters of Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Jacks of considerable dimensions (*Seriola* spp.) and Guelly Jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) are abundant.

A large quantity of Azores Chromis can be seen from about 15 meters to the surface, especially on the Eastern wall of the drop, providing colorful tone to the column of water. Close to the bottom, Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) are common. From the southern side of the drop, it is possible to spot a small lavatic tunnel where it is common to observe various nudibranch species, as well as colonies of Yellow encrusting anemone (*Parazoanthus axinellae*) covering the rocks.



Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 35 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 32m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa da Penedia is located on the eastern coast of the island of Santa Maria, next to the bay of Maia, just 50 meters from the coast, and 35 minutes by boat from the marina of Vila do Porto. With a top located at about 3 meters of depth, this dive falls to 32 meters of maximum depth, offering various diving profiles and circuits.

At the drop's top, it is possible to observe an immense number of small fish above the seafloor covered in thoracica (*Megabalanus azoricus*) which often serve as shelter to small, colorful gobies (*Parablennius incognitus*). Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and various species of eels are also common.

On the western side of the drop, there is an oval cave at a depth of approximately 15 meters. Continuing the drop until 30 meters we find various branches of Black coral (*Antipathella Wollastoni*) and various small caves with small schools of Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthia anthia*). Moving on to the South, the bottom slightly rises and we find a large crevice where one can usually spot a large Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and a cluster of White trevallies of great dimensions.

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 40 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 16m (mín.), 35m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The drop known as "Baixa dos Badejos" is located on the eastern coast of Santa Maria (approximately 30-40 minutes by boat), about one mile in distance from the coast, in front of Vila da Maia.

This locale presents an extensive platform at 16 meters of depth, that drops abruptly to 35 meters, where the bottom is made up of a mixture of large rocky blocks, round stones and small sand clearings.

This drop finds itself in a highly exposed zone, where there are generally strong currents, a factor that is recompensed by the abundance of clusters of pelagic fish in the water column and the presence of ocean floor species like the Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and the Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*).

Arriving at 30 meters deep, it is almost impossible to count the number of Comb groupers beside the diver. Amongst the whirl of Comb groupers, it is also possible to observe Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*) and some Dusky groupers, which appear immediately due to their assertive and curious behavior.

The rise to the surface is done with an anchor rope - many times, accompanied by clusters of Yellow-mouth barracudas (*Sphyraena virdensis*), and sometimes Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*).



Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 30 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 14m (mín.), >40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty

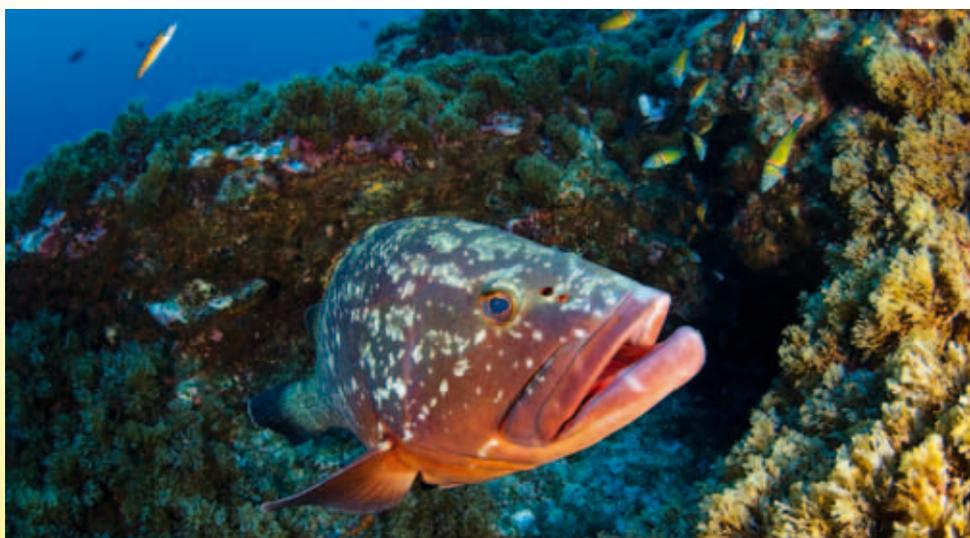


The Banco João Lopes is situated on the Northern coast of the island of Santa Maria, approximately one nautical mile from the Noroeste dos Anjos (approximately 30 minutes by boat).

The top of this drop is at 14 meters of depth, falling to 45 meters. Since it is in an unsheltered zone, it sometimes presents strong currents, a factor that, due to the elevated depth around the drop, implies that the diver must have some experience for this dive.

At the top of the drop, at 14 meters of depth, the diver can already observe fauna typical of the Azorean depths: the Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), schools of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*) and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*).

The rocky formation presents sharp slopes and vertical walls interrupted by some landings between the 15 and 20 meters ideal for observation of large pelagic, such as yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*) and Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), as well as the observation of large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), that are normally seen along the vertical wall and, for the luckier ones, the presence of groups of Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*) tranquilly gliding around the drop.



Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 40 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 17m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Gruta Azul is one of the most interesting cave dives on the island of Santa Maria, especially because of its large dimensions and the environmental variety that it offers. Located on the eastern coast of the island, close to the Bay of São Lourenço, it requires a trip of approximately 40 minutes by boat.

This cave is located in one of the extremities of a small, sheltered bay has three different exists, offering highly interesting circuits through 150 meters of stone halls that break out in impressive shines of light. With an average depth of 13-14 meters and a maximum of just 17 meters, it allows for long dives to explore the lengthy corridors between the three exits.

Along the cave as a whole, it is possible to see various types of colorful sponges, as well as small nudibranchs that find shelter in the hollow of the walls. Near the bottom, Common stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) of great dimensions are also commonly seen, motionless or gliding along the corridors. On days when the ocean is more choppy, it may not be possible to leave from the eastern side of the cave (*the most exposed*) and the circuit will have to be inverted, exiting in the bay.



GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 15m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

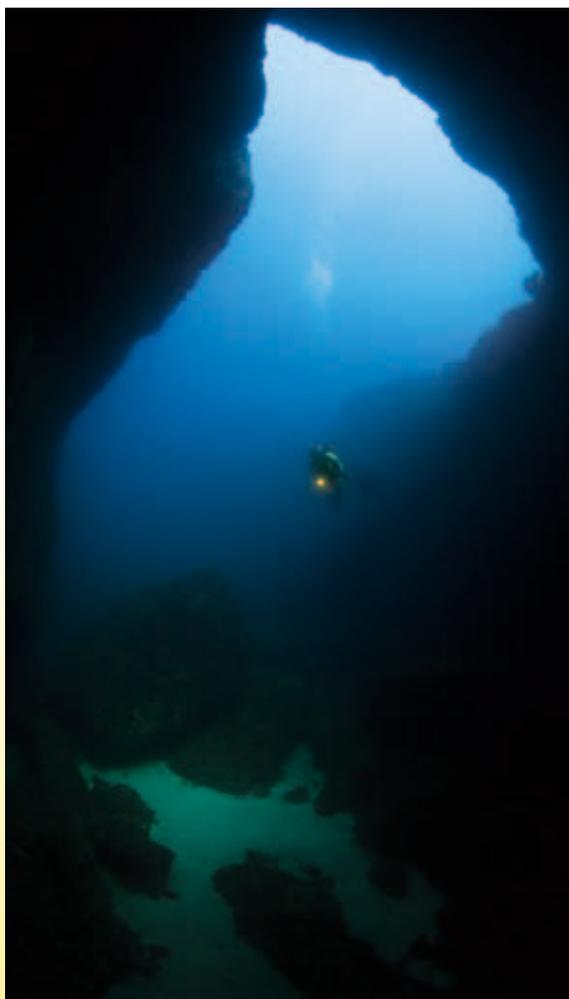
Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Gruta Funda is located approximately 10 miles from Vila do Porto. This dive is recommended for more experienced divers, especially since the principal attraction - a cave of great dimensions - is situated between 30 and 40 meters of depth and in a zone subject to moderate currents.

The top of this drop is located at 15 meters of depth, where you can visit a lavatic tunnel where various species of nudibranchs are often abundant. Continuing until the end of the tunnel, the depth increases until the entrance to the cave, which is of great dimensions in the form of a cathedral.

The entrance to the cave is located at 33 meters of depth, falling to 40 meters in the interior, with a sandy bottom. Inside the cave, it is common to find large Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) in clusters, as well as Common stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) above the sandy bottom and Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*) in the wall crevices. The cave can be crossed, leaving from the opposite side and beginning the rise to the top of the drop to eventual decompression landings. The ceiling of the drop presents a large abundance of common species, such as various eel species, Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), and the Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*).

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Located just half a mile from the marina of Vila do Porto and 200 meters from the coast, there is a small islet, called the Ilhéu da Vila, about 50 meters tall. The islet completes the natural park of Santa Maria, for both its importance in bird nesting and for diving.

Due to the considerable dimension of the islet, various circuits are possible in this locale, although, generally, the two most utilized circuits are the Northern side (the most exposed to the sea) on the days of calm waters or on the southern side on the days when the sea is rougher.

Around the islet the maximum depths vary between 12 and 18 meters. One can spot a reasonable quantity of species of the ocean floor common to the Azores, such as the Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), various eel species and even some Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidoplois scrofa*).

The side facing the north is more favorable to the appearance of pelagic fishes like Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*) and Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), especially next to the entrance and even inside a small cave of about 12 meters in depth, where it is also common to find nudibranchs and diverse crustacean species like Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*).

Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*)



ILHEÚ DAS LAGOÍNHAS

SANTA MARIA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the marina of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 5m (mín.), 22m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Located on the Northern coast of the island of Santa Maria, approximately 9 miles from the marina of Vila do Porto, there is a small islet called the Ilhéu das Lagoínhas. Next to this islet there is a small drop with its top at 5 meters, falling to approximately 22 meters.

Around all of the drop, one can see a reasonable quantity of ocean floor species common in the Azorean sea such as Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), various eel species and even some Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*).

As the depth increases, it is possible to visit a small cave and, depending on the quantity of marine life present, and especially if there is a particularly friendly Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) present, you can continue in this zone or continue in direction of the small islet.

Although this is a fairly easy dive on the days in which there is little to no current, this zone is favorable to the appearance of currents of some intensity.

Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

PEDRINHA

SANTA MARIA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the marine of Vila do Porto.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The drop at Pedrinha is one of the best-known and easiest accessed diving locales on the island of Santa Maria. This location, which is today a marine reservation due to its importance for diving, is situated less than a mile from the coast, in front of Praia Formosa, and just three miles from the port of Vila do Porto.

This drop presents a large platform filled with life between 6-10 meters of depth, on the northern side, dropping to 20 meters and, on the southern, to more than 50 meters of depth.

The abundance of life is immediately visible at the top of the drop, but this dive offers various circuits between 4 different caves. The most accessible is a large crevice that rises from 17 meters of depth to the top of the drop.

Along this marvelous "architectural world," one can observe the usual Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), and Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), among others. In between the rocks and caves, with the increase of depth, one can find Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrof*). It is also usual to observe large clusters of pelagic fish and, sometimes, Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*).



Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*)

SÃO MIGUEL



- ▣ Âncoras do Ilhéu (66)
- ▣ Arcos da Caloura (67)
- ▣ Baixa do Espelho (68)
- ▣ Baixa das Castanhetas (69)
- ▣ Baixa do Frade (70)

- ▣ Cabeços do Ilhéu (71)
- ▣ Dori (72)
- ▣ Ilhéu de Vila Franca (73)
- ▣ Lourenços (74)
- ▣ Panela (75)



Known as the “green island,” the island of São Miguel is the biggest of the archipelago and has the largest population. The island is about 54 miles in distance from its closest neighbor, the island of Santa Maria, and approximately double this distance from the closest island in the central group, the island of Terceira. To visit this island, there are direct flights from Lisbon, Oporto, and Faro, the islands of Santa Maria, Terceira, São Jorge, Pico, Faial, and Flores, and various international capitals. During the summer months, there also exist various connections to the other islands through maritime means.

Due to its area, this island presents an enormous diversity of places to visit, being known, above all, for the beauty of its lakes. Amongst the best-known attractions, some highlights are the Lagoa das Sete Cidades, on the western part of the island, known as the blue and green lake, since there is a small bridge that seems to divide the lake in two, the more ample one reflecting the blue of the sky and the smaller, the green of the surrounding vegetation.

The protected landscape of the Lagoa do Fogo, elected as one of the seven marvels of Portugal, is also an obligatory visit. Here, it is possible to walk to the margins of the lake. Located in the central zone of the island, it occupies an extensive crater of an inactive volcano, surrounded by vegetation interrupted by extensive, white sand beaches.

Finally, the Lagoa das Furnas and its famous hot-water craters serve as a testament to the volcanic origin of these islands, with diverse geysers both surrounding the monumental lake as well as in the town of Furnas itself.

Situated on the southern coast, significantly in the middle of the island, the city of Ponta Delgada offers an urban movement that provides a pleasing contrast with the encompassing Nature.

For divers, São Miguel offers a great variety of diving spots, as well as the advantage of daily, direct flights and a picturesque city. Amongst the most well-known diving spots, without a doubt the Dori ship sinking stands out. The Dory is a Liberty ship from the Second World War that rests upon the sandy bottom at a depth ideal for diving and only a few minutes from the city of Ponta Delgada.

The small islet of Vila Franca, located a few hundred of meters from Vila Franca do Campo, is a locale that offers excellent coastal dives due to its status as a marine reserve. On the other hand, the island of São Miguel is also known for its dives in coastal drops, especially on the Western points, as well as a departure point to the mythical diving spots of Formigas and Dollabarat (Pg. 42 and 44), located approximately 40 miles from this island, these are locations known for encounters with large clusters of pelagic fish, manta rays, and sharks.

ÂNCORAS DO ILHÉU

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 2 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 45 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada.
Depth: 14m (mín.), 22m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Âncoras do Ilhéu diving spot owes its name to the fact that, in this location, there exists diverse centennial anchors of various types and sizes, scattered in a reduced space. The reason for this concentration of anchors owes itself to the historical importance of Vila Franca do Campo, the first historic capital of the island.

The top of this small drop that extends about 30-40 meters, located halfway between the marina and the islet of Vila Franca do Campo, is situated at only 14 meters of depth, while the sandy bottom is positioned at 22 meters. Approximately 8 anchors are spread in the area surrounding the drop, the largest at more than 2 meters long, with even more remote anchors around the drop.

To the archeological interest of this dive, we add a quite interesting marine life with large stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) and small striped Red mullets (*Mullus surmuletus*) next to the sandy bottom.

Above the ocean floor, various species of eels and nudibranchs are common, as well as various crustacean species in the small caves and hollows next to the bottom of the drop.

Its shallowness, proximity to the marina, and relative shelter provided by the Ilhéu de Vila Franca do Campo make this locale ideal for nighttime diving.



Anchor

ARCOS DA CALOURA

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 30 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada.
Depth: 5m (mín.), 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Arcos da Caloura are situated on the southern coast of São Miguel, just 300 meters from the coast, in front of the Caloura Hotel. This zone, located in a sheltered bay, generally presents little current and a bottom formed by lava drains, where it is possible to observe fantastic small arches and a cavern of great dimensions, with four entrances.

The top of the cavern is situated at 5 meters deep, dropping then to one of the entrances, at 16 meters deep. This fantastic scenery, where one can observe the entrance to the cavern and some small arches around it, is inhabited by dozens of different small species like Wide-eyed flounders (*Bothus podas mederensis*) and Guinean puffers (*Sphoeroides marmoratus*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), White sea breams (*Diplodus sargus cadenati*), Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), the Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), and various eel species. Upon entering the cavern, it is often possible to observe a cluster of large Gully jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) on the inside, as well as some resident Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), that are normally found in very narrow holes.

On the ceiling, one can observe various nudibranchs of different species (ex: *Hypselodoris picta azorica*, *Discodoris atromaculata* and *Polycera quadrilineata*).



BAIXA DAS CASTANHETAS

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 30 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 45m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa das Castanhetas is situated on the southern coast of São Miguel, less than 500 meters from the coast, in front of the Caloura swimming zone. This diving spot is, perhaps, one of the locales of the island that offers a most impressive scenery, constituted of lava drains and lava tubes that originated in diverse caverns, tunnels, and interlinked gorges, forming a true labyrinth.

At the top of the drop, at approximately 12 meters deep, there is a cavern with three entrances where one can generally observe a cluster of Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) of great size, as well as various crustaceans hidden in the crevices. A long tunnel departs from this cavern and ends at the exterior wall of the drop, along which we can observe dozens of Cardinal fish (*Apogon imberbis*) and small Nudibranchs (ex: *Hypselodoris picta azorica*).

The top of the drop is quite large with depths between 12-18 meters and various other small tunnels and caves where it is common to observe Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) of large dimension amidst the clouds of Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), to which this drop owes its name. The drop then falls in a vertical wall towards the south, reaching depths greater than 45 meters where, besides the species already referred, one can observe clusters of pelagic fish and, sometimes in the summer, Manta ray swimming tranquilly in the Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*).



Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*)

BAIXA DO ESPELHO

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the marine of Ponta Delgada, 60 minutes from the marine of Vila Franca do Campo.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 23m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



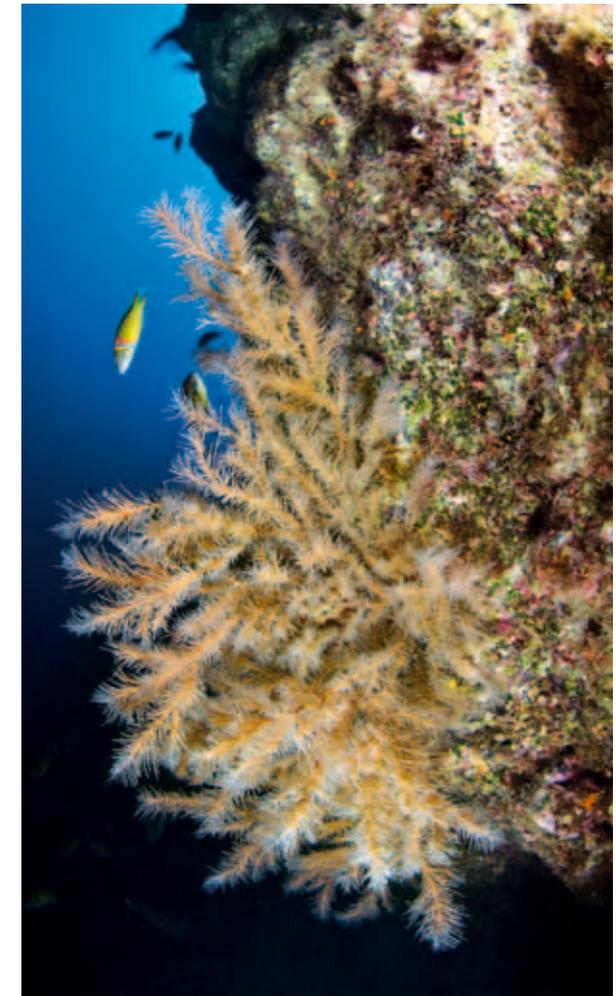
The Baixa do Espelho is located about 200 meters from the coast in front of the locale of Relva, approximately 5 miles west of the Ponta Delgada marina.

The top of this drop is situated at 6 meters deep, easily visible from the surface on days when the sea is calm. The top of the drop presents life typical to the bottom of the Azorean sea, with small colorful fish, such as the Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), various eel species, small clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*) and Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*) above the rocky bottom covered in small hermit crabs in between the crevices.

If we follow to wall of the drop, we find a small cave with branches of Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*). Continuing along the wall, the sandy and rocky bottom finds itself at 23 meters deep, where it is sometimes possible to see stingrays of great dimensions (*Dasyatis pastinaca*), as well as colorful Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthia anthia*) next to the walls.

This is also an excellent locale to observe clusters of pelagic fish such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*).

Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*)



BAIXA DO FRADE

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 60 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delada.

Depth: 7m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa do Frade is located just 20 meters from the coast, near the Ponta Garça lighthouse that stands out on the coast at more than 100 meters in height, approximately 3 miles east of the marina of Vila Franca do Campo.

This diving spot presents a variety of depths and quite diverse visible species. The top of the drop is located at 7-10 meters deep, where one can see an immense number of small colorful fish typical of the Azorean seas. This drop then falls towards the east and presents fantastic branches of Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*), typical of dives to great depths, at just 14 meters deep.

Following along the wall of the drop, the bottom made up of sand and rocks is located between 22 and 25 meters, where it is possible to sometimes see large stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*). Continuing eastwards, we find another wall whose base serves as an origin to caves where it is possible to see Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*). This is also an excellent location to observe clusters of pelagic fish such as Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena viridensis*).

Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*)

CABEÇOS DO ILHÉU

SÃO MIGUEL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 50 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada.

Depth: 25m (mín.), 45m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Cabeços do Ilhéu diving spot is located less than a mile from the Ilhéu de Vila Franca do Campo. This is the most visited of the 4 deepest drops in this area, excellent for technical diving. This locale, although it is recommended only for experienced divers due to the currents that may occur here, as well as the greater depth, is one of the best dives on the island to observe the deep water fish.

The top of the drop is located approximately 25 meters deep, gradually falling to 45 meters. The top of the drop, especially in the zones of more sheltered hollows, is covered with large branches of Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*), among which we see exceptionally large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidoplois scrofa*) travelling slowly.

In the extremities of the drop, we find the ideal locale to observe impressive clusters of pelagic fish, such as Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena viridensis*) surrounding the divers, and sometimes, in the summer, manta rays swimming tranquilly in the Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*).



Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*)

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada, 45 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo.
Depth: 9m (mín.), 21m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



On January 16, 1964, a cargo ship sank 800 meters from the coast, in front of the São Roque church, on the southern coast of the island of São Miguel. A more in depth investigation of the story of this vessel would come to reveal that the cargo ship was, after all, originally the Edwin L. Drake, a Liberty Ship constructed during the Second World War in the United States. It was one of the few ships of this kind to participate in the landing of the Allied troops in Normandy.

Today, this cargo ship is still found in the same place, resting in vertical position above the sandy floor at 20 meters of depth, a few minutes from the capital of the Azores. It provides for incredible dives. Due to its historical and cultural importance, as well as the importance for diving, the shipwreck and the surrounding area constitute a subaquatic archeological park.

All diving is done around the vessel, whose stern top is located at 9 meters and whose bow finds itself, at the deepest point, at 20 meters. The stern, at the north, is still quite intact. Continuing to the south towards the bow, it is possible to observe among the destruction still some intact divisions as well as stairs, capstans, large tubes, and even the ship boilers. All of this zone constitutes a subaquatic archeological park created for the preservation of the ship and its marine life.

Amidst the destruction, one can observe abundant marine life, constituted of species common of the depths of the Azorean seas but in surprising quantity.



GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 45 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada.
Depth: 5m (mín.), 22m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ilhéu de Vila Franca do Campo is located on the southern coast of the island of São Miguel, less than 500 meters from the coast and right in front of the town to which it owes its name. This location is a protected area and offers diverse and excellent dives along its walls, as well as large crevices and canyons. The location of the dive is chosen in accordance with the direction of the current and undulation.

The islet, of circular form, corresponds to the emerged part of a small underwater volcano that originated more than 4,000 years ago.

During a dive around the islet, we can observe a great variety of species, such as diverse eel species, Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*). Above the bottom, and due to its status as a protected area, a great variety of smaller species is abundant, such as Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Ballan wrasses (*Labrus bergylta*), and Barred hogfish. Above the sand clearing, many times we find Common stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) of impressive size. In the meanwhile, upon looking at the blue that surrounds this fantastic scenery, it is possible to find White trevallies (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyraena viridensis*), and Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*).



GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 50 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada, 80 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo.

Depth: 24m (mín.), 60m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Lourenços drop is located approximately 2 nautical miles from the western point of São Miguel and 13 miles from the marina of Ponta Delgada. This locale, although it is recommended only to experienced divers due to the strong currents that may occur and greater depths, is one of the best dives on the island for the observation of pelagic fish.

The top of this drop consists of a small pinnacle located at about 24 meters, falling to an extensive platform at about 30 meters, where the majority of diving is done. The top of the drop presents a rare abundance of deep-water species, such as large eels of various species (many times outside of the holes that they normally occupy), as well as large red scorpionfish, motionless above the rocks, and innumerable deep-water species including large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*).

In the extremities of the drop that falls vertically to about 60 meters, we find the ideal locale to observe impressive clusters of pelagic fish such as Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna virdensis*) surrounding the divers and, even sometimes, in the summer, manta rays swimming tranquilly in the Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*).



Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, (15 minutes from the marina of Vila Franca do Campo, 35 minutes from the marina of Ponta Delgada), or coast.

Depth: 8m (mín.), 17m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



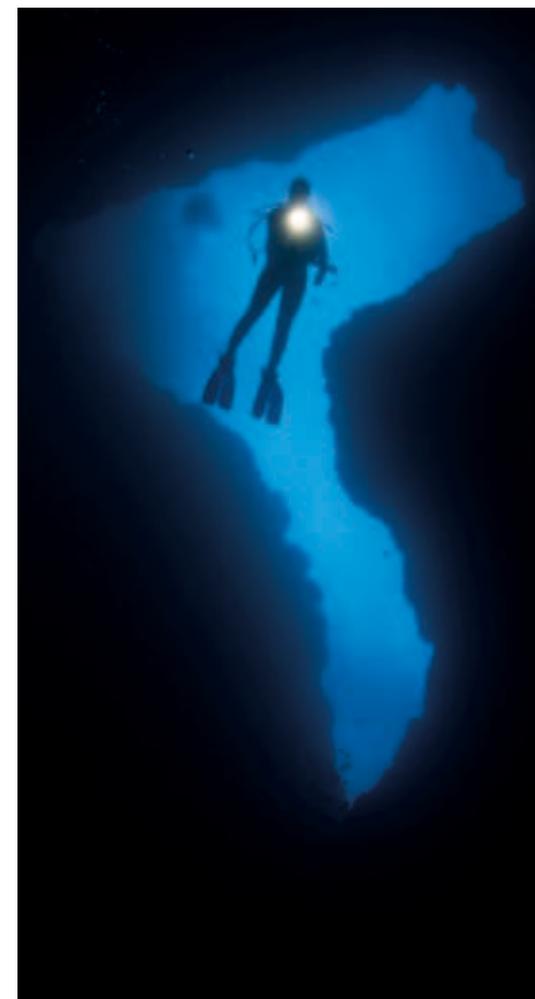
Panela is situated on the southern coast of São Miguel, about 200 meters from the coast, in front of the area called Cerco da Caloura. This locale is so close to the coast that the dive can be done with the coast itself as a departure point, or with the support of a vessel.

This spot is formed by arches, caves, and a cavern, whose two entrances are very close to the surface, making this dive impossible in conditions of strong undulation or currents.

The bottom, that is located in the access area to the cavern at 10 meters deep, consists of large, rocky blocks. Here, it is possible to observe fauna typical to the Azorean coast, like Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), white seabream, Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), and Salema (*Sarpa salpa*).

After entering, the diver "lets himself fall" into the darkness of the cavern, until its bottom at 17 meters deep, where one can observe the snippets of light from the two entrances, one to the southeast and the other to the northwest, right next to the ceiling.

Inside the cavern, it is possible to see some cardinal fish (*Apogon imberbis*) and, sometimes, Conger eel (*Conger conger*) of great dimensions. You can also find Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*), Guinean puffers (*Sphoeroides marmoratus*), and Nudibranchs (ex: *Discodoris atromaculata* and *Hypsodoris picta azorica*).





- ▣ Arcadas do Judeu (80)
- ▣ Baixa da Vila Nova (81)
- ▣ Calheta do Lagador (82)
- ▣ Cemitério das Âncoras (83)
- ▣ Cinco Ribeiras (84)
- ▣ Fradinhos (85)
- ▣ Gruta do Ilhéu das Cabras (86)
- ▣ Ilhéu da Mina (87)
- ▣ Lidador (88)
- ▣ Pedra Perdida (89)
- ▣ Santa Catarina (90)



The utmost value of this island does not reside in the beauty that is so characteristic of the landscape of Terceira Island, but in the cultural and historical fields. We will see how current this historical patrimony still is. It can be observed from above as well as from below the water.

Located at about 43 nautical miles from Graciosa Island, it can be visited using direct flights from Lisbon, and from the islands of São Miguel, Graciosa, Fayal, Pico, São Jorge, Flores and Corvo, with various international destination flights. During summer, it is also possible to travel by boat to any other island in the archipelago.

Angra do Heroísmo, was classified as World Heritage by UNESCO in 1983. It has a vast array of monuments and historical buildings. They witness the historical relevance of the first village of the territory that became a city, during the Discoveries' Era, with a great role played on the establishment and maintenance of the Portuguese Empire. Protected by the extinct volcano of Mount Brazil, Angra Bay had enough depth for ships with a larger tonnage, such as the carracks, and provided shelter from all winds but southeast.

The Algar do Carvão (an ancient lava tube or volcanic vent whose name means Coal Cave) is located at Guilherme Moniz Caldera, right in the middle of Terceira Island and is indeed well worth a visit. This Regional Natural Monument is part of a sleeping volcano. One can descend it to a depth of 100 metres and discover a clear-water natural underground lagoon where many types of stalactites can be seen.

Praia da Vitória (Victory Beach) as its name implies, offers splendid conditions for lovers of sun, beach and nautical sports, such as surfers.

From a diver's point of view, Terceira Island is probably the one that offers more variety of diving spots. It has interesting dives to observe marine life and unique rocky formations as well as dives with an awesome cultural and historical interest.

The Subaquatic Archaeological Park is located at Angra Bay. It is made up of various archaeological sites, some of them already exploited while others are still being discovered. A true subaquatic museum, it has been open to the public since 2006; showing traces and evidence of the strategic importance of the city of Angra throughout the centuries. The two most visited diving places are, undoubtedly, the Anchor Graveyard, where one can observe more than 40 anchors from the 16th till the 20th century, and the wreck of the 78-metre long steamboat Lidador, used to link Brazil and Portugal with a stopover in the Azores. It sunk on this spot back in 1878.

On the other hand, there are numerous interesting dives due to the wealth of marine life. One of such dives is Fradinhos, a group of small islets that come to surface at about five miles from the south coast of Terceira, with an abundance of large shoals of pelagic fish, Dusky grouper and Red hogfish. Terceira Island is also the closest island and one of the major departing points to one of the best diving spots in the archipelago of the Azores, the Dom João de Castro Bank. There, it is common to find large shoals of pelagic fish, Chilean devil ray and even sharks.

ARCADAS DO JUDEU

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from Angra do Heroísmo Harbour.
Depth: 16m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The “Jew Arcades (Arcadas do Judeu)” diving spot is located on the south coast of Terceira island at the village of Porto Judeu. It is located westwards of the small fishing Pier of Porto Judeu, a 15-minute boat ride from Angra do Heroísmo Harbour and just in front of Goat Islets. Although the marine life is quite interesting, this is a unique spot by its imposing rocky formations.

This cove has a rocky bottom of rolled gravel and large dimension boulders with a rich marine life in common species so typical of the Azores sea bottom.

Going westwards, we reach a first arcade of about 7 metres wide. At its bottom of rolled gravel we may see some Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*). Once we get past the arcade’s length of 10 metres, we are at a corridor between two vertical walls, going towards a bay where we find a rocky formation. It is the highlight of the dive: an imposing rocky “staircase” coming from the bottom up to the surface. Indeed, it is an interesting geological formation, quite similar to the Giant’s Stairs in Ireland, a group of basalt prismatic columns, fitting each other, as if forming an enormous road of gigantic stone, moulded by the prismatic disjunction of a large mass of basaltic rock resulting from a volcanic eruption.



Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*)

BAIXA DA VILA NOVA

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.
Depth: 12m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



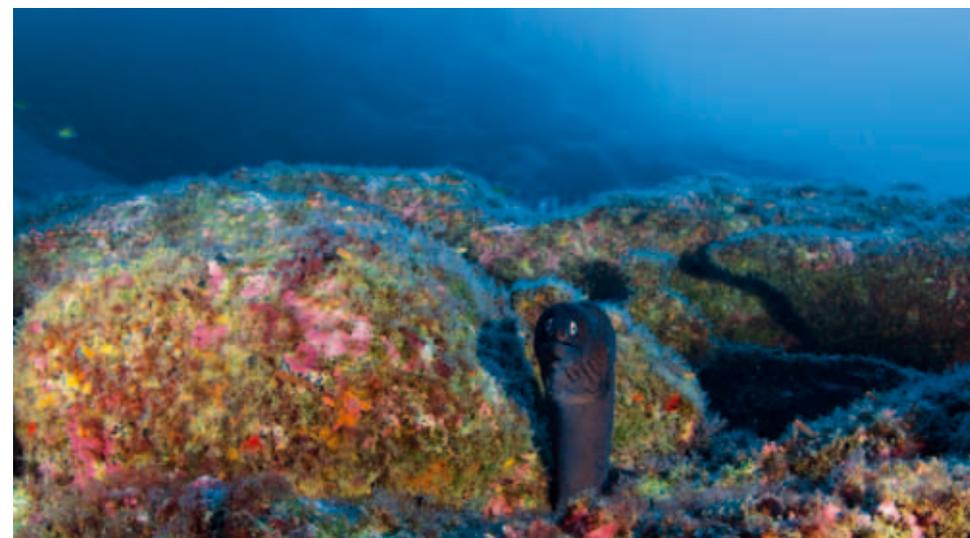
Difficulty



The diving spot of Baixa da Vila Nova is located on the northern coast of Terceira island, approximately 20 minutes by boat from the port of Praia da Vitória. It is a dive indicated for experienced divers, since it is located at a coastal drop approximately 2 miles from the coast, where the depths may oscillate between 12 and 30 meters, and where the presence of currents is possible.

Characterized by its diverse rocky formations, walls, kiddles, and even round pebbles, it is a quite interesting dive in terms of landscape.

Along the coastal drop, in the rocky zone we can observe Greater locust lobsters (*Scyllarides latus*), in the crevices created by these rocky formations of great dimension. In the middle of the water we can observe schools of Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*) and Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsels, as well as some passerby pelagic fish, such as Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*) and sometimes Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*). As the depth increases, we can find clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*).



Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

CALHETA DO LAGADOR

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Coast, 15 minutes by car from Angra do Heroísmo.

Depth: 12m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Calheta do Lagador is located at the old whaling village of Biscoitos, on the north coast of Terceira Island.

This dive is done directly from the coast, in the swimming zone itself, which forms a small natural bay with the bottom at 4 meters deep, sheltering an incredible number of young species, therefore constituting an authentic “nursery” for various fish species.

In between the rocks and algae, one can observe young Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Common two-banded seabream (*Diplodus vulgaris*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and, in the water column, schools of small Axillary seabream (*Pagellus acarne*) and Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyrna viridensis*).

Leaving the bay, the depth gradually increases and small gorges or canyons appear at a depth of 12 metres. From this point onwards, we may opt for progressing eastwards, following the coastline through this labyrinth of valleys made up of vertical walls. We may also opt for going northwards, further away from the shore, where the depth slowly increases to a maximum of 18 metres and watch some pelagic fish such as Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Yellowmouth barracuda. Along this entire route, we may sight Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and various species of Moray amidst the small gorges and gaps.



Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*)

THE ANCHOR GRAVEYARD

CEMITÉRIO DAS ÂNCORAS

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from Angra do Heroísmo Harbour.

Depth: 35m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Bay of Angra do Heroísmo shelters the Subaquatic Archeological Park of the Bay of Angra do Heroísmo, a park formed by various archeological sites and that includes the “Cemitério das Âncoras.” In this area of approximately 500 meters, located just three minutes by boat from the port of Angra de Heroísmo and indicated by two buoys, we can find more than 40 anchors between 15 and 35 meters of depth, dispersed in this location due to bad weather and anchoring errors throughout several hundred years.

Going down at the northernmost marker buoy, until a depth of 16 metres, we may find in the neighbouring area one of the most emblematic anchors of this spot, anchor “555” supported by a large rocky boulder. As the diver moves, southeast, to deeper waters, there are various anchors, until reaching a vertical wall, descending to a depth of 35 metres, where we can find an enormous anchor in inverted position.

On this wall we find the Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), White sea breams (*Diplodus sargus*), young Axillary sunbreams (*Pagellus acarne*), Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*) and even Common stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) and Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) of great size.



CINCO RIBEIRAS

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Coast, 15 minutes by car from Angra do Heroísmo.

Depth: 16m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life 

Depth 

Difficulty 

It is on the southeastern coast of Terceira, just 11 km (15 minutes by car) from Angra do Heroísmo, that we find the natural pool of Cinco Ribeiras, which gives access to a complex of the best-known subaquatic caves of this island.

This cave complex is formed by various galleries, all connected by corridors and small spaces.

The dive is initiated in the natural pool, continuing next to the wall that is found on the right. As the depth increases, marks left in the sand by the abundant Common stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) are immediately noticeable, as one finally reaches the first entrance to the cavern of Cinco Ribeiras.

In the first chamber of the cavern, we find walls covered in Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*). This first chamber is linked to two others of greater dimensions, where one can observe various species of eels and nudibranchs, authentic clouds of colorful red cardinalfish, as well as Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), that are often observed feeding on the abundant Narwal shrimp.

Traveling through the various galleries, the diver will find another exit situated on the opposite side of the entrance point, and is able to opt to return through the cave complex or through the exterior, accompanying the wall that is this time located on the left.



School of Salemas (*Sarpa salpa*)

FRADINHOS

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the port of Angra do Heroísmo and

25 minutes from the marina of Praia da Vitória.

Depth: 60m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life 

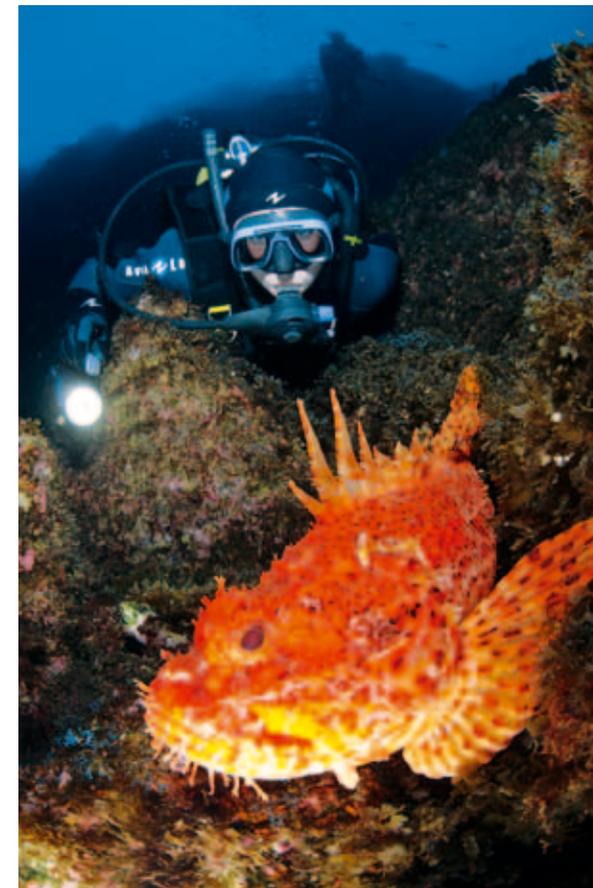
Depth 

Difficulty 

The Fradinhos Islet is located on the south coast of Terceira Island, about five nautical miles (20 minutes) from Angra do Heroísmo Harbour and seven nautical miles (25 minutes) from Praia da Vitória. It is a well-known spot for its excellent dives. Its formation matches the top of a submarine volcanic associated to the tectonic structure, Terceira Rift. Its localisation requires divers with some experience since sometimes it has undulation, strong sea currents and great depths.

In this immersion, the bottom drops progressively until passing 60 meters. Along the entire trajectory we find a large abundance of species typical of the marine bottom of the Azores, such as Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), and the colorful Chromis limbata, that present themselves in elevated numbers in this area. On the southern side of the islet, beginning at 30 meters we find colorful Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*), large Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*), and large Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*).

Along the whole dive, one must take care of the blue, since this is a favourite spot to encounter large shoals of pelagic fish such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*) and even the majestic Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*).



Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*)

GRUTA DO ILHÉU DAS CABRAS

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Angra do Heroísmo and 30 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.

Depth: 24m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life 

Depth 

Difficulty 

The Ilhéus das Cabras are located half a nautical mile from the southern coast of the island of Terceira, approximately 15 minutes by boat leaving from the port of Angra do Heroísmo. It is on the northern slope of the Ilhéu Oeste das Cabras (Western islet) that one can find the Gruta do Ilhéu das Cabras or Gruta dos Ratões that owes its name to the fact that, in the summer, the observation of a large number of stingrays (*Myliobatis aquila* and *Taeniura grabata*) is frequent in the interior.

Starting this dive at its deepest area at about 24 metres, one can observe the typical fauna from the Azores sea bottom. These are the Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), large shoals of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Canary damsel (*Abudefduf luridus*) as well as shoals of pelagic fish, namely, Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*).

Continuing south, the depth decreases until reaching the entrance of the cave, located at 15 meters of depth, rising to the surface and permitting that vessels enter into the interior. As we enter the cave, the bottom decreases in depth, until reaching 12 meters, and is often complete with the shadows of often-times more than a dozen stingrays, gliding in the water column.



Purple sea-star (*Ophidiaster ophidianus*)

ILHÉU DA MINA

TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from the port of Angra do Heroísmo and 20 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.

Depth: 35m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life 

Depth 

Difficulty 

The small Ilhéu da Mina, about 20 meters long, is at a mere 50 meters distance from the island of Terceira, near the town of São Sebastião. It is about 25 minutes by boat from the port of Angra do Heroísmo and 15 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.

The dive starts close to the islet and we may opt for descending its vertical wall, down to a depth of 20 metres, leaving the observation of the rich marine life for decompression platforms and safety stops. Moving westwards, we cross various gorges between the islet and a nearby reef, whose depth ranges between 25 and 3 metres. Along this route, it is possible to watch a large variety of fish on the water column such as small Horse mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*) and, quite often, Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*) and Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) feeding.

Southwards of this reef the depth increases to around 35 metres, from where an imposing rocky formation emerges with a height of about 15 metres. On this area, we may see some branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) as well as Greater locust lobster (*Scyllarides latus*), Common spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*) and quite often, one or more Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*).

Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*)



LIDADOR TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Coast or Boat, 2 minutes from Angra do Heroísmo Harbour.
Depth: 8m (mín.), 10m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



This 78 meter-long vapor crashed in shallow waters in front of the fortress of São Sebastião on February 6, 1878, sinking to approximately 8 meters deep and 50 meters from the coast, parallel to the Figueirinha docks. Today, it is a part of the Subaquatic Archeological Park of the Bay of Angra do Heroísmo.

The access to the dive identified by two yellow buoys is made directly through the port of the Nautical Center of Angra do Heroísmo, or through a short, two minute trip by boat, leaving from the port of Angra do Heroísmo.

Although the best-conserved part of this ship is the bow, we can observe some vestiges of the ship that are still identifiable along the almost 80 meters that separate the stern and the bow. Amidst these historical vestiges, one can observe various nudibranch species, an admirable quantity of Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), as well as Common bream (*Pagrus pagrus*), large clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*) in the water column, Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Axillary wrasses (*Symphodus mediterraneus*), and Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), as well as other species more difficult to find, such as the Planehead filefish (*Stephanolepis hispidus*) and the Streaked gurnard (*Trigloporus lastoviza*).



Lidador shipwreck

PEDRA PERDIDA TERCEIRA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.
Depth: 16m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Pedra Perdida diving spot is located on the northeastern coast of Terceira, 15 minutes by boat from the port of Praia da Vitória. This dive requires some experience, given that it entails a localized dive in a more exposed zone, where the current can be at times strong, and the depth can oscillate between 16 and 30 meters.

This dive is characterized principally by a large, rocky pinnacle that ascends from a platform of round rocks found at 22 meters until 12 meters of depth. Around this large rocky formation, it is possible to observe Bermuda sea chubs (*Kyphosus sector*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Almaco Jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyraena viridensis*) in the middle of the water.

In the rocky zone, we can observe some Dusky groupers, in between the innumerable crevices and rocky flats created by the sharp pebbles. As the dive is being carried out, above the essentially rocky bottom, it is possible to observe two more rocky formations, as well as large Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), and Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*).

Grey triggerfish (*Ballistes capriscus*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the port of Praia da Vitória.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Santa Catarina diving spot is located to the east of the bay of Praia da Vitória, just 5 minutes by boat. This dive does not require much experience, being that it is in a sheltered zone with moderate depths, between 12 and 18 meters. It is a good place to carry out dives for adaptation.

Characterized by interesting rocky formations, rocky banks and lavatic draining, together with the white sand clearings, this locale becomes quite interesting in terms of landscape.

In the rocky zone we can observe Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) and Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*) in between the crevices created by these stones of large dimensions. As the depth increases, heading eastward, we can observe clusters of Salemas (*Sarpa salpa*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), and Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*). In the various zones of white sand, it is sometimes possible to observe some stingrays.

Round stingray (*Taeniura grabata*)



GRACIOSA





Graciosa Island is the second smallest island in the archipelago with 4,800 inhabitants it is located at around 22 nautical miles from São Jorge Island and 43 nautical miles from Terceira Island. To visit, there are air links with Terceira Island as well as a regular boat service to the other islands throughout the summer months.

It is the least mountainous island of them all, reaching an altitude of only 402 meters, which provides it with a moderate oceanic climate and the least rainfall in the whole archipelago. The Sulphur Cavern (Furna do Enxofre) is a rather rare vulcanological phenomenon, located inside a gigantic Caldera on the eastern side of the island. It is a large and daunting lavic cavern accessible by an imposing tower with a winding stairway stretching for almost 200 steps. The exploration of this cavern, with a perfect dome ceiling, a little lake and a small field of fumaroles inside, started at the dawn of the 20th century following the initiative of various researchers, notably Albert I, Prince of Monaco.

All over the island, it is easy to find spots for a relaxing bath along its dented coast, particularly the Carapacho Thermal baths. It is a thermal resort at the foot of the Caldera on a sheltered bay with a view to the Carapacho Islets. Graciosa Island has a much-dented coastline with many interesting rocky formations. Its most famous is known as the "Whale Islet" and is visible from the picturesque lighthouse at Barca Point. This name derives from its configuration, similar to a whale.

A visit to the village of Santa Cruz da Graciosa shows an historical town centre rich and balanced in its architecture, a classified area in the Heritage List that no one should miss to visit. Equally important is a visit to the village of Vila da Praia where one can enjoy a terrific sea bath and visit the factory where they make the famous "Queijadas da Graciosa" (cheesecakes).

From a diver's point of view, Graciosa has become, more and more, the "Diving capital of the Azores," offering a great variety of diving spots with well-equipped and experienced diving centres. Being such a tiny island, enables one to depart from Vila de Santa Cruz or Vila da Praia and experience the various dives along the whole coast of the island, depending only on meteorological conditions. The Reefs near Vila de Santa Cruz are well known and coveted by the divers. They have great shoals of pelagic fish, Dusky grouper and colourful branches of Black coral. However, its two most famous diving spots are the "Terceirense" shipwreck, lying at a depth of 21 metres on the east coast of the island just in front of the entrance to the Praia Harbour, and the magnificent Carapacho Cave on the islets of the same name.

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from St^a Cruz da Graciosa Harbour and 2 minutes from Vila da Praia Marina.

Depth: 3m (mín.), 32m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The dive at Senhora da Guia Reef is located next to Praia Islet, 200 metres away from the shore at Graciosa Island. It is just in front of São Mateus, the second most important village of the island, also known as Praia. This Reef is located at less than 2 minutes from São Mateus Harbour, only 15 minutes away from Santa Cruz da Graciosa, and 50 metres east of the Praia Islet.

The upper part of the Reef is at a depth of 3 metres, descending slowly to about 8 metres depth. In this area, we can find a large variety of small fish such as the colourful Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*). It is worth mentioning, for those more attentive to small organisms, the presence of Azores barnacle (*Megabalanus azoricus*) busy with Incognito blenny (*Parablennius incognitus*) and colourful colonies of Yellow cluster anemone (*Parazoanthus axinellae*).

From the platform, the Reef falls abruptly to around 30 metres depth. However, on the western slope there is a small arcade at a depth of 16 metres. There, you can watch branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) with a considerable size, and occasionally a Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), that normally stays at the deeper depth of the dive, or more than 20 metres.



Black-faced blenny (*Tripterygion delaisi*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from St^a Cruz da Graciosa Harbour and 25 minutes from Vila da Praia Marina.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Lighthouse Reef got its name from its location just in front of the Barca Point Lighthouse, on the north Coast of Graciosa Island. A 10-minute boat ride from Santa Cruz Harbour, this Reef is only 100 metres away from the shore and, sometimes, it is the ideal diving place since it is sheltered from southerly winds.

The dive starts on a platform located at around 14 metres depth where we can normally see shoals of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capricus*) and Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) as well as various specimens of more common species such as Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*).

Going northwards, the depth starts increasing slowly and we can start watching some Dusky Grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*) all the way to a second platform bottoming at 25 metres and ascending to 17 metres. Here, we find one or more considerably sized Dusky grouper, as well as small branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*). It is well worth mentioning a small cave that is ideal to observe various species of crustaceans such as the Mediterranean slipper lobster (*Scyllarides latus*).



BAIXA DO FERREIRO DE DENTRO

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from St^a Cruz da Graciosa Harbour and 18 minutes from Vila da Praia Marina.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 28m (máx.)

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ferreiro de Dentro Reef is only 3 minutes away by boat from the harbour of Santa Cruz da Graciosa. Whilst being very close to the largest village of the island, yet it is a major spot to watch large dimension pelagic fish.

The upper part of the Reef is at a depth of 5 metres and its bottom at around 28 metres, what makes this spot ideal for long lasting dives at big depths. The platforms and safety stops can occur at the bottom of the Reef.

There are various platforms on this dive, at around 10-15 metres depth, and there, we can watch shoals of various large dimension pelagic fish, such as Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) and Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*).

When we go deeper, it is common to find various Dusky grouper, some of them quite inquisitive, and a few Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*).

When starting the ascent, at the upper part of the Reef, we are offered the magnificent abundance and wealth of typical species of smaller colourful fish. These, can be the Mediterranean rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*) and Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) among others. The luckier ones will see the gracious Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) swimming close to the surface, especially during the summer months.



School of Salemas (*Sarpa salpa*)

BAIXA DO FERREIRO DE FORA

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from St^a Cruz da Graciosa Harbour and 18 minutes from Vila da Praia Marina.

Depth: 7m (mín.), 44m (máx.)

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ferreiro de Fora Reef is only 3 minutes away by boat from the Santa Cruz da Graciosa Harbour, very close to Ferreiro de Dentro Reef. Although these two reefs are quite close to the largest village of the island, the richness and biodiversity of these places made them the most visited diving spots of the island.

The upper part of the Reef emerges abruptly to a depth of 7 metres. On the rocks, quite often covered by Incognito blenny (*Parablennius incognitus*), there is plenty of Azores barnacle (*Megabalanus azoricus*). Between the small gaps we can sight Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*) as well as a large quantity of Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), White seabream (*Diplodus sargus*) and Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*).

Descending to a lengthy platform, at a depth of 15 metres, quite often we can see Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) feeding on schools of smaller fish.

Continuing the descent on the vertical wall, we find many branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) at a depth of 28 metres. However, for those who would rather have a more conservative dive, there is a lonely branch of Black coral at 18 metres depth with respectable dimensions.



Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*)

BAIXA DO PESQUEIRO LONGO

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 6 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz da Graciosa and 20 minutes from the marina of Vila da Praia.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Pesqueiro Longo Reef is located on the northeast coast of Graciosa island, a 6- minute boat ride from Santa Cruz Pier, in front of the Red Clay Islets.

With its top located at 6 meters deep, this drop presents its base at 96 meters deep with a platform at approximately 20 meters on the eastern side.



On the top and along the steep walls of the drop, we can find crevices fill with Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena Helena*), and a large quantity of the most common fish species in the Azores, such as colored Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), and clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*)

As the dive increases its depth, we can find various large-sized Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) as well as Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*). Once past the 25 metres depth, the scenery is enriched by colour with large branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) whose colours fluctuate between the white and yellow tonalities. Amongst the gaps and openings on the walls, there are clouds of Swallow-tail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*).

During some summer months, this place is well-known for the majestic Devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) and Manta ray (*Manta birostris*) swimming on the water column, sometimes at only a few metres depth.

Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*)

BAIXA DO TERCEIRENSE

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING 

DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz da Graciosa and 10 minutes from the marina of Vila da Praia.

Depth: 5m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Carapacho Islets are located on the southern coast of Graciosa Island, half a nautical mile from shore. It is a 25-minute boat ride from Santa Cruz Pier and three miles from Praia Harbour.

The Baixa do Terceirense diving spot is located approximately 100 meters to the northeast of the small islet. The small platform that constitutes the top of the drop is located at 5 meters deep, full of small colorful fish typical to the marine bottom of the Azores, such as Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*) and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), among many others.

From this point of depth, there is an abrupt drop - on one side, to 30 meters, and on the other, to a second platform at 16 meters deep. Along this break, we can find many Brown moray (*Gymnotorax unicolors*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*), and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), as well as Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*).

The second platform, at 16 meters, is the ideal locale to spot Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena virdensis*), and Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*).

From this stop, we can move on to a second platform at a depth of 30 metres, while observing many branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) along the wall, and sometimes, Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) on the platform or by the bottom at 39 metres depth.

From this stop, we can move on to a second platform at a depth of 30 metres, while observing many branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) along the wall, and sometimes, Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) on the platform or by the bottom at 39 metres depth.



GRUTA DO CARAPACHO

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING

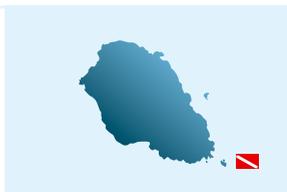


DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz da Graciosa and 10 minutes from the marina of Vila da Praia.

Depth: 32m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Carapacho Islets are located on the south coast of Graciosa Island, half a nautical mile from shore. It is a 25-minute boat ride from Santa Cruz Pier and three miles from Praia Harbour.

The “Cave of Carapacho Islet” is located in a great gap on the southern side of the bigger islet.

This dive is initiated within the cave itself, which declines from the surface until 17 meters. Beyond the richness of marine life that we can find in its interior, the cave presents a unique landscape due to the backlight that we can admire as we penetrate the shadowy interior of the cave that prolongs itself for approximately 50 meters.

The cave walls are ideal for the observation of various species of nudibranchs, especially the Azorean zebra doris (*Hypselodoris picta azorica*). Exploring its interior, we find a shy Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), many Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*) as well as Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*).

Outside the cave, we move eastwards following the wall of the islet and among the rolled gravel at the bottom we may observe the usual Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), shoals of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*), as the bottom descends to a depth of 32 metre.

Purple sea-star (*Ophidiaster ophidianus*) and Blacktail Comber (*Serranus atricauda*)

ILHÉU DA GAIVOTA

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 25 minutes from Stª Cruz da Graciosa Harbour and 10 minutes from Vila da Praia Marina.

Depth: 14m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Seagull islet is a small islet right in front of the swimming area of the Carapacho Thermal Resort and 50 metres away from the shore, towards the Carapacho islets. Its sheltered environment localisation on the south coast of Graciosa Island makes this an excellent option for windy days with northern sea currents.

The dive starts at the west wall of the islet, its depth gradually increasing along a wall with a small incline, until reaching the sandy bottom located at a depth of 14 metres. Along the wall, we can observe various gaps and recesses, ideal to see species such as the Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and a diversity of species so typical of the sea bottom.

Once we get at the bottom, it is common to see the Common eagle ray (*Myliobatis aquila*) resting on the sand, as well as large shoals of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*) and Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) on the water column.

Moving northwards, we reach a large gap on the wall, giving access to various holes and recesses, where it is possible to see Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and shoals of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*).



School of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

NAUFRÁGIO TERCEIRENSE

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz da Graciosa and 2 minutes from the marina of Vila da Praia.

Depth: 16m (mín.), 21m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The sunken ship, Terceirense, is located in front of the town of São Mateus (or Vila da Praia), less than 2 minutes by boat from the port of São Mateus and just 15 minutes from Santa Cruz da Graciosa

This ship, about 40 meters in length, crashed against the “Baixa do Terceirense” in 1968, when it was crossing between Graciosa and Terceira, ultimately shipwrecking at the entrance of the Porto da Praia where it rests at the bottom at 21 meters.

The stern of the ship, oftentimes surrounded by Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoli*), is still quite intact, with the hull laid to the side of the starboard and the large propeller on the opposite side, still attached to the vessel.

Amidst the debris of large portions of the hull, tubing, boilers and various metallic parts, it is possible to see large quantities of small sized species. They are the Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Axillary wrasse (*Symphodus mediterraneus*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Ballan wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*) and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*). Also present are large-sized Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*), Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*) and Conger eel (*Conger conger*) and even various species of Moray, often swimming on the free water between the debris.



RESTINGA DO FREIRE

GRACIOSA

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Coast.

Depth: 15m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Restinga do Freire is situated on the northern coast of Graciosa, right in front of the Santa Cruz da Graciosa docks. An easy dive in a sheltered locale, it is an ideal spot for less-experienced divers, a first dive on the island, or a nighttime dive.

The dive is initiated in the docks of Santa Cruz da Graciosa, with the bottom located at 7 meters deep, progressing with a quite accentuated slope until 15 meters deep

Right at the start of the dive, on the less deep area, it is possible to observe juvenile specimens of diverse species such as White seabream (*Diplodus sargus*) and Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*). As the depth increases, if we look attentively, we can see various Morays (*Muraena helena*; *Muraena augusti*) and Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) between the rolled gravel. During the entire dive it is possible to sight shoals of quite some dimension of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), as well as Rainbow wrasse, Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and White seabream. On the mixed bottom, of sand and rolled gravel, we can also find some small Guinean pufferfish (*Sphoeroides marmoratus*).

Although this dive is located right on the harbour zone, at its deepest part at around a depth of 15 metres, the diver may sometimes find some considerably sized Comb grouper and Dusky grouper as well as shoals of Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*) swimming in groups much closer to the surface.

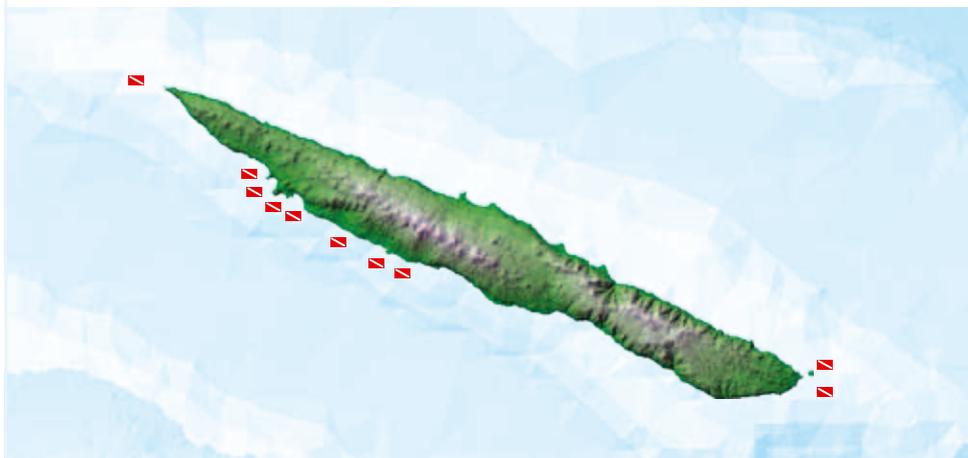


Mediterranean moray (*Muraena Helena*)

SÃO JORGE



- ▣ Baixa de Entre-Morros (110)
- ▣ Baixa dos Rosais (111)
- ▣ Baixio da Ponta da Queimada (112)
- ▣ Gruta dos Corais (113)
- ▣ Ilhéu da Urzelina (114)
- ▣ Ilhéu do Topo - Norte (115)
- ▣ Ilhéu do Topo - Sul (116)
- ▣ Mouro de Lemos (117)
- ▣ Pesqueiro-Alto (118)
- ▣ Portinhos da Urzelina (119)



Well known by its breathtaking “fajãs” alongside its green slopes, São Jorge Island is one of the “Triangle Islands” just 11 nautical miles north of Pico Island and 14 nautical miles from Fayal Island. To visit, there are normal flights between this island, Terceira and São Miguel, a daily boat service to Pico and Fayal. During the summer season, there is also a regular maritime service to the other islands in the archipelago.

This long and slim island is widely known by its “fajãs” created by the penetration of lavic flows onto the sea, after descending its steep ravines. From dozens of “fajãs” that emerge along the island’s green cliffs, the best known and coveted by the visitors, are those inaccessible on the north coast of the island, often only reachable after long walks. The Holy Christ Fajã (Fajã de Santo Cristo) is probably, the most emblematic of this island. It is only accessible on foot and it has a lagoon directly linked to the sea. The waterfalls on its vicinity invite for a relaxing bath. Its clear waters also provide one of the best European surfing spots.

Escalating the Esperança Peak, the highest mountain on the island with 1,053 metres offers a spectacular view for hundreds of miles around, on any given day with a good visibility. Atop its volcanic cone, one can watch the various fajãs, as well as Fayal and Pico Islands on its southern slopes, Terceira and Graciosa Islands on its northern-looking slopes. The São Jorge Island makes an exceptional venue for Canyoning with aplenty waterfalls and creeks coming down its steep slopes.

On the south coast of the island there are various belvederes frequently sought by visitors who want to watch the sunset between the Pico Mountain and Fayal Island, with a view to the capital of this island, the historical village of Velas.

It is thanks to the rough shape of this island that it is possible to have diving spots of an astonishing beauty. One can get the best immersion on both extremities of the São Jorge Island, at Rosais Reef and Topo Islet. The concentration of pelagic fish on these two spots is “breathtaking” due to the intensity of water currents. Along the coast, you may be surprised by numerous submarine arches, caves and caverns that host an enormous quantity and variety of fish.

From a diver’s perspective, this 50 km long island provides a coastal line with copious unique diving spots. Although its oblong shape implies longer boat trips, the distinctive scenery alongside its cliffs with waterfalls and fajãs and a vast variety of dives make this island a spectacular diving destination.

Even though the most coveted diving spots are located on the East and West Points, all along the southern coast of the island one can find caves, arches and bays with an immense wealth and an exceptional biodiversity.

BAIXA DE ENTRE-MORROS

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 21m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Located in a sheltered area, this dive is initiated in a large islet located next to the wall of the Morro (hill) to the Northeast, that rises approximately 30 meters above water and drops to 10 meters deep. Following its vertical wall, one can observe clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), as well as Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), and Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) in the crevices of the islet's wall.

Following in direction of the center of the bay, the depth increases among large blocks of stone where one can observe Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), Ballan wrasses (*Labrus bergylta*), and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*). One will also be able to observe some passerby pelagic species, such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Derbyio (*Trachinotus ova-tus*), and Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capricus*). The sandy bottom is reached at 21 meters, where we can spot Wide-eyed flounders (*Bothus podas*), Atlantic lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*), and, occasionally, Round stingrays (*Taeniura grabata*).

Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*)

BAIXA DOS ROSAIS

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 30 minutos from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 15m (mín.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa dos Rosais owes its name to the fact that it is located 3 nautical miles to the west of the most western point of the island of São Jorge, Rosais, approximately 30 minutes from the port of Velas.

Despite the existence of depths that vary between 15 and 50 meters in this locale, this dive is typically carried out at the top of the drop, since the principal attraction of this spot is the observation of pelagic fish. A location likely to have strong currents, it is, perhaps, one of the only diving spots visited in the central group that present an abundance of pelagic fish clusters that can be compared to the seamounts Princesa Alice and D. João de Castro.

From the top of the drop, the diver will be able to observe large clusters of Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Jacks (*Seriola* spp.), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), and Shipjack tunas (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), that patrol the top and the surroundings of the drop in search of large concentrations of potential prey, such as blue jack mackerels, mackerels, and the boga-portuguesa, which, by the thousands, form clusters in constant movement.

The top of the drop is also very rich in common species, such as Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*) and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Black combers (*Scorpaena atricauda*), Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*), some small nudibranches (ex: *Hypselodoris picta azorica*) and even the occasional Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*).

Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*)

BAIXIO DA PONTA DA QUEIMADA

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 10m (mín.), 28m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



This dive is located just 3 minutes by boat from the port of Velas. The Baixo da Ponta da Queimada consists of a coastal drop situated approximately 250 meters from the coast in front of the locale, Queimada.

The drop is made up of an extensive platform with depths that vary between 10 and 24 meters, falling in its extremities to 60-70 meters.

The platform has various hillocks and interesting rocky formations with corridors, small caves and recesses, teeming with marine life. Among them the Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Ballan wrasse (*Labrus bergylta*), Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and Salema (*Sarpa salpa*) as well as some pelagic species passing by, such as Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*). Some remarkably sized Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) are also a common presence in this area. However, these specimens are not very social, since this area is close to the shore and that forces them to higher feeding efforts.

It is worth noticing the presence of Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) in large numbers along the top of the platform.



GRUTA DOS CORAIS

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 2 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 5m (mín.), 24m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty

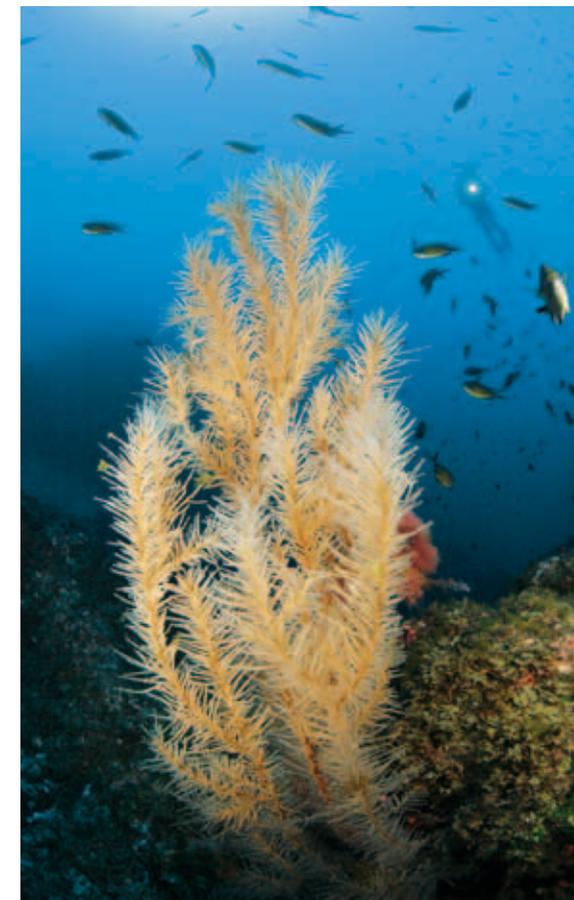


The “Coral Cave” diving spot is a 2-minute boat ride from the Velas Harbour, 50 metres away from the shore of the town of Velas.

It is a dive not to be missed in São Jorge Island albeit the small distance from its major town.

The dive starts between a depth of five and 10 metres and it is possible to find a rich marine life with common species to the Azores sea bottom. These are the Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), apart from many a moray including the less-common Bird-eye conger (*Enchelycore anatina*). Moving southwards, this rocky platform abruptly descends to 24 metres, where we find the entrance to the “Coral Cave.” Its large entrance looks like a “frame” of branches of various colours and sizes of Black coral. Inside we see areas filled with Narwal shrimp (*Plesionika narval*), Cardinalfish (*Apogon imberbis*) and Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*).

Exiting the cave and turning to the right, the dive progresses along a vertical wall and one can even visit a second cave at 15 meters deep, continuing ultimately to the top of the platform.



Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 14m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Urzelina Islet dive, close to a small islet rising from a depth of 10 metres to the surface, is located at about 150 metres from the Urzelina Harbour, a 20-minute boat ride from Velas Harbour.

The dive starts 100 metres away from the islet where one can visit two small rock arcades at a depth of 10 metres, westwards of the islet.

In this zone, Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Ballan wrasses (*Labrus bergylta*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) are abundant, as well as Salemas (*Sarpa salpa*) and the occasional Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*).

Moving on towards the islet, the topography of the bottom and its depth stays at around 10 metres, until we are confronted with an imposing islet that rises vertically from the sea bottom to the surface. Its vertical walls are not especially rich in marine life, however, the wall facing south has a small cave where we can see Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), the colourful Cardinalfish (*Apogon imberbis*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*) and sometimes a considerably-sized Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*).



Urzelina Islet

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 75 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ilhéu do Topo is considered an *ex libris* of dive in São Jorge. Made up of only one circular islet of 20 hectares and located at the eastern point of the island of São Jorge, today it is classified as a Natural Reservation. Despite the fact that the islet is just 100 meters from the coast, this diving spot is about 25 miles from the port of Velas, which signifies a trip of 75 minutes by boat.

The “Ilhéu do Topo - Norte” diving spot is characterized by the existence of various rocky tips that fall to between 15 and 25 meters. The likelihood of strong currents make this locale ideal for the observation of pelagic fish, like the large clusters of Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*), Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), various tuna species and even Wahos (*Acanthocybium solandri*).

Going further down to deeper areas and towards the islet, we may find, amid rock corridors, the typical species of the Azores sea bottom. Furthermore, there is an exceptional quantity of Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*) and colourful Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*) of large dimensions, whilst the water column is typically filled up with great shoals of Yellowmouth barracuda.



Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*)

ILHÉU DO TOPO - SUL

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 75 minutes from Velas Harbour.
Depth: 5m (mín.), 22m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ilhéu do Topo is considered an ex libris of dive in São Jorge. Made up of only one circular islet of 20 hectares and located at the eastern point of the island of São Jorge, today it is classified as a Natural Reservation. Despite the fact that the islet is just 100 meters from the coast, this diving spot is about 25 miles from the port of Velas, which signifies a trip of 75 minutes by boat.

Since this zone is located by the extremity of the island, it is oftentimes affected by strong currents, making it so that this dive requires some experience.

Initiating the dive by the southern coast of the islet, we find a bottom at between 5-10 meters deep, where Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), and Canary damsels (*Abudefdug luridus*) are abundant, as well as Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), and Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*).

As the depths increases until reaching approximately 23 meters, we can find large clusters of pelagic fish, such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyraena viridensis*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*), and Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), as well as life next to the bottom, including Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*), and Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*).



Purple sea-star (*Ophiaster ophidianus*)

MOURO DE LEMOS

SÃO JORGE

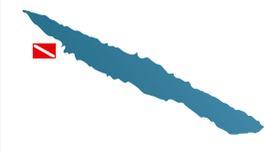
GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from Velas Harbour.
Depth: 14m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Mouro de Lemos dive is located 5 minutes by boat from the Velas port, on the western slope of a volcanic cone next to the town of Velas.

Initiating the dive along a rocky cliff, at 8 meters deep we will find the first cave of small dimensions that exists on the wall, as well as a second, of greater dimensions, with a sandy bottom at 17 meters. This is the principal point of attraction of this dive, since we can observe the interior walls of the cave, covered by innumerable Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*). Amidst the shrimp, small, red cardinalfish are abundant, at times swimming in inverted position.

Upon leaving the cave we follow a route alongside the slope, westwards, at increasing depths that may reach 30 metres. At the end of the slope, divers are no longer sheltered by the bay and may feel increased sea currents and undulation. This area is ideal for the observation of pelagic fish such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*) and Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) as well as small shoals of Horse mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*) surrounding the divers. On this area, it is also possible to see some branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*), quite abundant in the waters of São Jorge Island, even at lower depth dives.



Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*)

PESQUEIRO-ALTO

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from Velas Harbour.

Depth: 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Pesqueiro-Alto diving spot is situated on the southern coast of the island of São Jorge, between Terreiro and Urzelina, in a point of prolongation of the coast over the sea. Inaccessible by land, this local is approximately 20 minutes by boat from the port of Velas.

The maximum depth reached in this dive is 25 meters, along a bottom constituted mainly of lava drains and medium-sized rounded pebbles, being it also possible to explore various caves of considerable size in this zone.

The observable species of this dive are the habitual ones present in the majority of coastal dives on the archipelago, such as clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Blacktail combers (*Serranus atricauda*), colorful Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), and Axillary wrasses (*Symphodus mediterraneus*). In the crevices existing in the rocks, we can find various eels species, such as Brown moray (*GymnThorax unicolor*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*), and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), while some cavities formed between the rocks are occupied by resident Dusky groupers. Since it is a zone with some currents, one can frequently find clusters of pelagic fish, such as Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Jacks (*Seriola* spp.), and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena viridensis*) in the zones closer to the surface.



Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

URZELINA'S LITTLE HARBOURS

PORTINHOS DA URZELINA

SÃO JORGE

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes / Car, 15 minutes.

Depth: 14m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Urzelina is a parish located on the southern coast of the island of São Jorge. It is in this summer locale, 20 minutes by boat or 15 minutes by car from the port of Velas, that the dive takes place.

The dive starts at the natural swimming pools at Urzelina's Little Harbours (Portinhos), a very sheltered area, rarely affected by sea currents and with a maximum depth of 14 metres. Going westwards, there are numerous caverns at low depth, namely one at only a depth of 8 metres characterised by an orifice, on its upper part, through which the sunrays penetrate. Both inside and outside, we will see the walls covered by "real" coral carpets of Yellow cluster anemone (*Parazoanthus axinellae*) as well as many juvenile specimens such as Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*) and large shoals of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*).

Exiting the cavern towards the south, the depth gradually increases until reaching 14 meters, a zone quite rich in all of the species previously mentioned, as well as eels and stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*), motionless above the ocean floor.

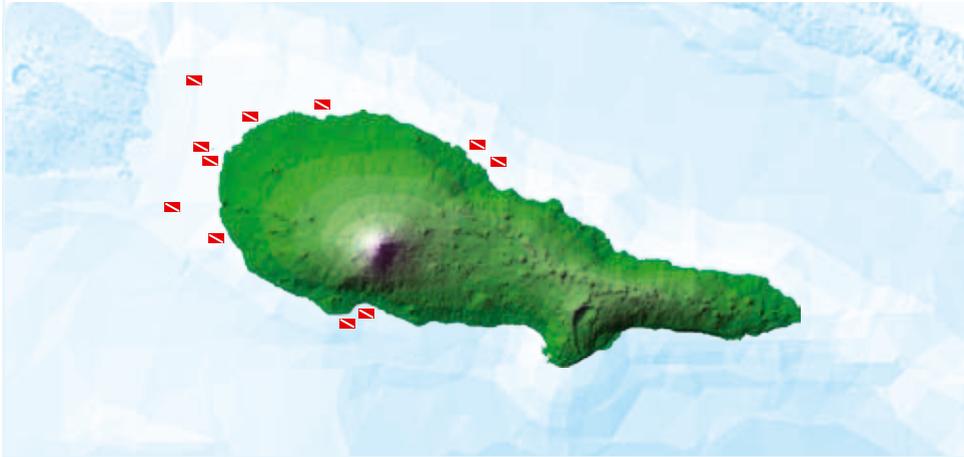
It is a very easy dive, with very interesting rocky formations, and an ideal spot for least experienced divers, for night diving or for apnoeic dives.



PICO



- ▣ Arcadas de São Roque (124)
- ▣ Arcos da Formosinha (125)
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Pico Island is also known as the “Mountain Island.” It is the second largest island on the archipelago, belongs to the “Triangle Islands,” located 4.5 nautical miles away from Fayal Island and 11 nautical miles from São Jorge islands. There are flights to the airports of São Miguel, Terceira and Lisbon, with a daily boat service link to Fayal and São Jorge Islands, as well as regular boat services, during summer months, to the other islands of the archipelago.

The landscape is dominated by the imposing Pico Mountain, the highest in Portugal and the third highest peak, emerging from the Atlantic Ocean to reach an altitude of 2,351 metres. Its summit is visible from almost anywhere on the entire island but the most remarkable landscape is only possible to be sighted by those who embark on the adventure of climbing up its steep slopes to reach its peak. From this spot, quite often well above the clouds, one can watch on the horizon, the islands of the Central Group as well as the green vineyard plantations climbing up amongst a pattern of rocky walls, the steep stony slopes of the mountain. The extraordinarily beautiful landscape created by man is reminiscent of ancient practices dating back to the 15th century. Today, the Landscape of the Pico Island Vineyard Culture is already classified by UNESCO as World Heritage.

Another relevant activity on the history of this island, well deserving the visitor’s attention, is whale hunting. It is possible to visit two Museums specialising in the theme, one at São Roque do Pico and the other, the Whaling Museum, at Lajes do Pico. Although this is the island where the whaling tradition is

more ingrained and the where the last sperm whales were hunted on the 1980s, it is also the place where a pioneering activity was created, representing an Azorean trademark. Indeed, whale watching still reflects today the bond between the people of Pico Island and the whales.

The proximity of Pico Island to the other islands of the “Triangle” allows for diversified dives. Apart from those dives alongside the coast, it is also possible to have dives relatively close by on the Chanel between Fayal and Pico Islands, as well as on the east coast of Fayal Island and even at Rosais Reef in São Jorge Island. On the other hand, the proximity of the Princess Alice Bank also allows a visit to this diving spot, considered by many as the best in the Azores.

Notwithstanding its clear waters, filled with exceptional marine wealth and biodiversity, probably the magnificent rocky formations around the island are what make this a unique diving destination. The highlights of its geological interesting dives are the double arches located at Pocinho Arches (Arcos do Pocinho).

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Land, 25 minutes by car from Madalena.

Depth: 3m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



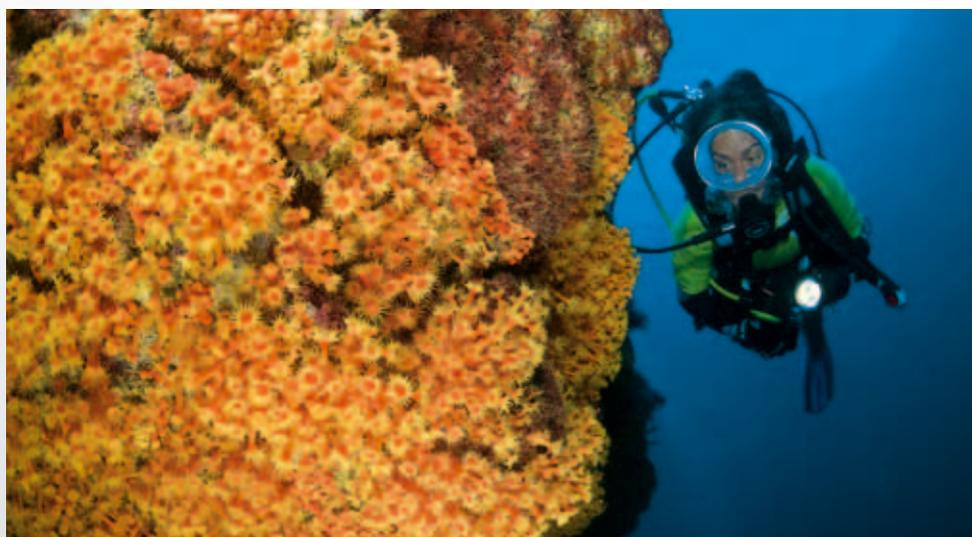
Difficulty



The dive at Arcadas de São Roque is situated at the locality of São Roque, on the northern coast of the island of Pico, approximately 25 minutes by car from Madalena. The entrance point is at the natural pools to the east of the center of São Roque, a zone quite sheltered from winds and currents.

This dive of minimal difficulty still offers a great diversity of marine life and fantastic rocky formation. Initiating the dive in the natural pools of São Roque, with the bottom at 3 meters, and following along the wall on the right side, the depth gently drops until 10-12 meters. Reaching the end of this wall and following to the Northeast, after about 100 meters one arrives to the principal point of interest of this dive: a large stone arch that rises from 16 meters to approximately 4 meters of depth.

Beyond the grandiosity of this arch, the marine life present is also exceptional, being that a large part of the rocky formation is covered in small Yellow encrusting anemone (*Parazoanthus axinellae*) and the top of the arch is surrounded by a large quantity of Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*). It is also common to observe clusters of Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) of great size circling this archway. Approximately 50 meters to the west of the arch, we find a second arch of considerable dimensions and equally rich in marine life.



Yellow encrusting anemone (*Parazoanthus axinellae*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from Madalena Harbour.

Depth: 8m (mín.), 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty

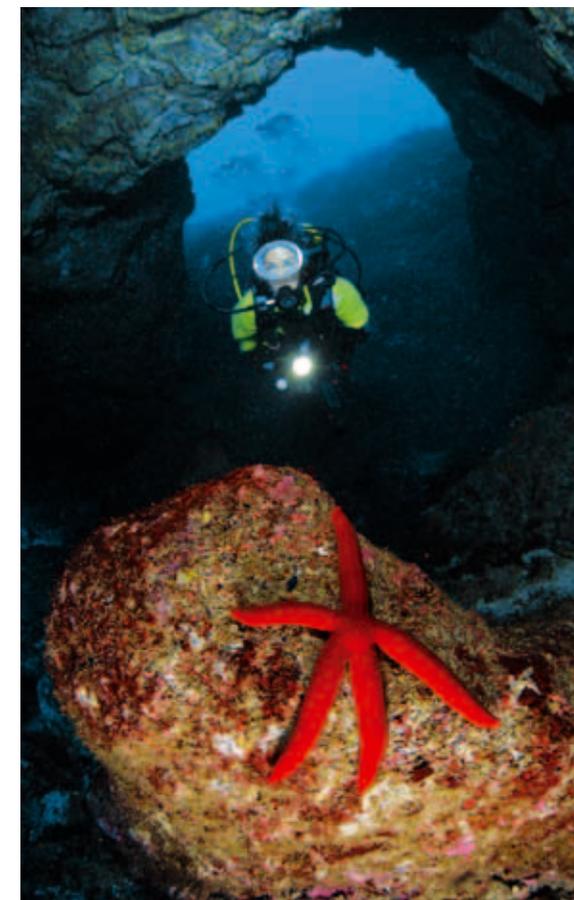


The Arcos da Formosinha diving spot consists of various archways located approximately 150 meters from the coast of the island of Pico, 15 minutes by boat to the northeast of the port of Madalena. A dive of little depth, varying between 8-18 meters, its level of difficulty is low, although there may at times exist some current.

We start this dive at the top of the Reef and a large cave is immediately visible at a depth of around 10 metres depth. Descending to the inner cave, we can see a large arcade. Once transposed, there are two other arches of a smaller size. On this area, we can sight Round stingray (*Taeniura grabata*), and for the luckier, Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) in a synchronised swim in shoals around the arcades.

Once you go around this Reef you may see various small arches and tunnels, where, amidst its crevasses and rolled gravel, it is possible to see Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) and Canary damsel (*Abudefduf luridus*) as well as various species of moray and nudibranchs.

Descending to the maximum depth of 18 metres in search of pelagic fish shoals such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) and Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), we may gradually go up to the top of the Reef, located at around 7-8 metres. Its bottom, fully covered by algae, is filled up with Mediterranean rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*) and Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*).



Purple sea-star (*Ophidiaster ophidianus*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from Madalena Harbour.

Depth: 9m (mín.), 23m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



This diving spot is located quite close to the western coast of Pico Island, right in front of the Pocinho swimming area, on the Pico-Fayal Channel, a 15-minute boat ride from Madalena Harbour. It is considered a diving calling card with geological interest where we can observe an awesome volcanic formation, which gave place to a couple of majestic arches, rising from the sea.

The dive starts at the top of a Reef created by lavic flows at a depth of 9 metres. Descending along the Reef wall there is a large valley made up by the vertical walls of the unequal bottom, descending progressively to a depth of 23 metres.

At the end of the valley there are two united arches coming up from the bottom of the Reef towards the high seas, creating a cave sided by those imposing arches. Inside the cave we can observe various small nudibranchs such as a Dorid nudibranch (*Tambja ceutae*), as well as various species of crustacean and small fish.

Inside this gigantic structure and between the arches, we can often see a large quantity of Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) as well as some species of pelagic fish in large shoals of Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and even some shoals of Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) that patrol the outer side of the rocky formation.



Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from Madalena Harbour.

Depth: 20m (mín.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa da Barca, one of the three drops that are found in the Faial-Pico canal, is situated approximately two nautical miles to the north of the islets of Madalena, 20 minutes by boat from the Madalena port.

This Reef has its less deep peak at around 20 to 25 metres. It is a very deep dive, subject to very strong sea currents. It is made up of very high walls, that surpass a depth of 50 metres on its north and west slopes. It has various platforms made up of large rocky boulders and rocky outcrops with peaks at a depth of 30 to 40 metres, creating valleys and corridors among them.

On the areas closer to the sea surface, especially during spring and summer, one can frequently find shoals of large pelagic fish such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Atlantic bonito (*Sarda sarda*), that find on this Reef a large concentration of potential food such as large shoals of Horse mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*).

On the deepest areas, between the rocky boulders, we can watch majestic Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*), coloured Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*) and Red scorpionfish (*Scorpaena scrofa*), Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), various species of moray and clouds of Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*).

If the diver is lucky, he or she may find Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*), Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*), or even the occasional turtle.

Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)



GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Madalena Harbour.

Depth: 17m (mín.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa do Norte is one of the three drops that are found in the Faial-Pico canal, situated approximately one nautical mile from the islet of Madalena and 10 minutes by boat from the Madalena port.

A deep dive and subject to strong currents, it presents a crown of approximately 150 meters of extension, averaging 17 meters of depth and falling to 40 meters.



At the top of the drop, especially during spring and summer, one can frequently observe large clusters of Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), and Shipjack tunas (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), that find a large concentration of potential prey, like large schools of Blue jack mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*) in this locale. In between the large blocks at the bottom, in the area surrounding the crown, one can observe majestic Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*), colorful Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidoplois scrofa*), Red scorpion fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*), Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), and various eel species.

From 30-35 meters of depth, we enter into the kingdom of the clouds of the colorful Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*), and magnificent white and yellow branch clusters of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*). And if the diver is lucky, he or she will even be able to find Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*), Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*), and even the occasional turtle.

Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*)

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Madalena Harbour.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



From all three reefs on the Fayal-Pico Channel, the South Reef located at 3 nautical miles southwest of Madalena Harbour (10-minute boat ride), has the larger extension and its peak is the least deep, at only 6 metres below the surface.

This drop prone to strong currents offers unique scenery, for it essentially consists of extensive superimposed slabs, with gaps of several meters between them, reminiscent of a large stairway that drops to 50 meters deep.

On some of the interstices between the flagstones, some curious geological structures developed in what constitutes a major attraction of this Reef. We mean the abrasion boilers, also known as "Giant's Pits" that can reach large dimensions, with a depth of 8 metres and a width of 3 metres.

This locale is ideal for the observation of clusters of large pelagic fish, especially during the spring and summer. Among the pelagic fish, it is common to observe Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), Shipjack tunas (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), and, for the luckier divers, an encounter with Devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*) or Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*).



Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*)

CACHORRO

PICO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes and Coast, 5 minutes by car from Madalena.

Depth: 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The diving spot of Cachorro is located on the north coast of Pico Island, just five minutes away from Madalena and very close to the shore. Its access can be either by boat or by land.

The dive accompanies the soft incline of the bottom that does not exceed 18 metres depth. The enormous variety of depths in this area is due to the existence of labyrinthine arches and tunnels that must be crossed by the diver. On a very small area, a diver must transpose no less than four arches.

On the darker areas it is easy to find a great variety of dorid nudibranchs such as the Azorean zebra doris (*Hypselodoris picta*) quite profuse on the ceilings of arches and caves. There are also abundant shoals of Thicklip grey mullet (*Chelon labrosus*) and Salema (*Sarpa salpa*) in this area, apart from the typical fish of the Azorean sea bottom such as the Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*). On the gaps between the arches and along the rolled gravel bottom, we may find Greater locust lobster (*Scyllarides latus*), Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and diverse species of Moray, especially Black moray (*Muraena augusti*). Whilst this area is not very sandy, there are some Round stingray (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) along the way, totally immobilised on the rocky bottom or “flying” on the water column.



SÃO CAETANO CORALS

CORAIS DE SÃO CAETANO

PICO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Land, 30 minutes by car from Madalena.

Depth: 3m (mín.), 60m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



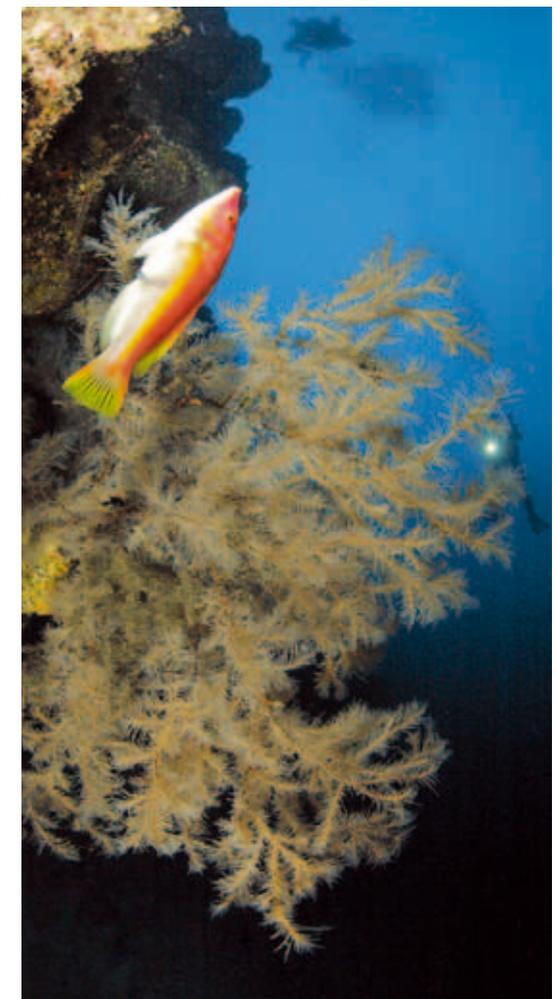
Difficulty



The dive at the Parede de São Caetano (São Caetano wall) is one of the two diving spots that are possible to visit departing from the small fishing port of São Caetano village, 30 minutes by car from Madalena, on the southern coast of the island of Pico.

Initiating this dive in the port itself, the initial depth is 3 meters, with a bottom both rocky and sandy, where it is possible to view some life typical to shallow waters. Following to the southeast, the diver will find a vertical wall that progressively falls from approximately 15-20 meters to 60 meters deep. At about 30 meters, we find a large quantity of branch clusters of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*), some of large dimensions. The crevices and holes are full of life, with Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean morays (*Muraena helena*), and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*), and the occasional Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*). This zone is also an excellent one to spot large clusters of passerby fish, such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), slipping away in the Blue.

When returning directly to the fishing harbour, the depth increases gradually until we reach the departing point. There, at a depth of 3 metres, we can make a safety stop and sporadic decompression platform.



Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) and Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*)

FURNAS DE SANTO ANTÓNIO

PICO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Land, 25 minutes by car from Madalena.
Depth: 3m (mín.), 17m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Furnas de Santo António dive is located close to São Roque, 25 minutes by car from Madalena, in the natural pool complex of Santo António.

Starting the dive at the Santo António Pools, the bottom is at a depth of 3 metres softly increasing to 10-12 metres as we go along the wall of the Cape that makes up the bay on our left side, through various stone corridors. It is a very rich area in typical low-depth species as Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) and Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*) among others. Going alongside the wall, until the end of the Cape, we find an arcade about 8 metres wide with a 10-metre long ceiling. Right on the middle of the ceiling, there is a small opening through where the sunrays penetrate the darkness of the arcade, providing a memorable counterlight.

After the visit to the archway, the diver will be able to do the inverse circuit, returning to the point of origin, or by following the coastal jag to the west, heading towards a small, natural port that is sheltered by two rocky massifs, forming a natural bay with a small, narrow passageway, returning by foot to the pools.

Rock goby (*Gobius paganellus*)

ILHÉUS DA MADALENA

PICO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from Madalena Harbour.
Depth: 9m (mín.), 18m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The two small islets of Madalena are located on the western coast of the island of Pico, half a nautical mile and three minutes by boat from the port of Madalena, forming a small bay sheltered on its northern side.

The choice of the diving circuit varies in accordance with the maritime conditions and the diver's experience, being that the zone between the two islets is more sheltered. Still, on days of calm seas, the dive can be done on the exterior wall of the Ilhéus Deitado, an excellent locale to view large stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*), many times more than 2 meters in length.

Along the walls of the Lying Down Islet, there are numerous openings, recesses and small caverns some of which host various species of nudibranchs and even one or more resident Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*). During the entire circuit, we can watch a large number of species quite common on the archipelago's bottom. These are large groups of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*) as well as the colourful Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*), Axillary wrasse (*Symphodus mediterraneus*), Azores chromis and Canary damsel (*Chromis limbata* and *Abudefduf luridus*) and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*).



GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Land, 30 minutes by car from Madalena.

Depth: 3m (mín.), 60m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The dive at the Parede de São Caetano (São Caetano wall) is one of the two diving spots that are possible to visit departing from the small fishing port of São Caetano village, 30 minutes by car from Madalena, on the southern coast of the island of Pico.

This dive is recommended both for expert and less experienced divers, since its depth ranges from three to 60 metres, and can be programmed taking into consideration each diver's expertise.

Going further southwestwards, the depth increases progressively until you reach the main objective of this dive: an imposing rock wall, starting at approximately a depth of 30 metres and abruptly falling to 60 metres. Its gaps and recesses are teeming with marine life such as large quantities of Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*), Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) and Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) as well as some branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*).

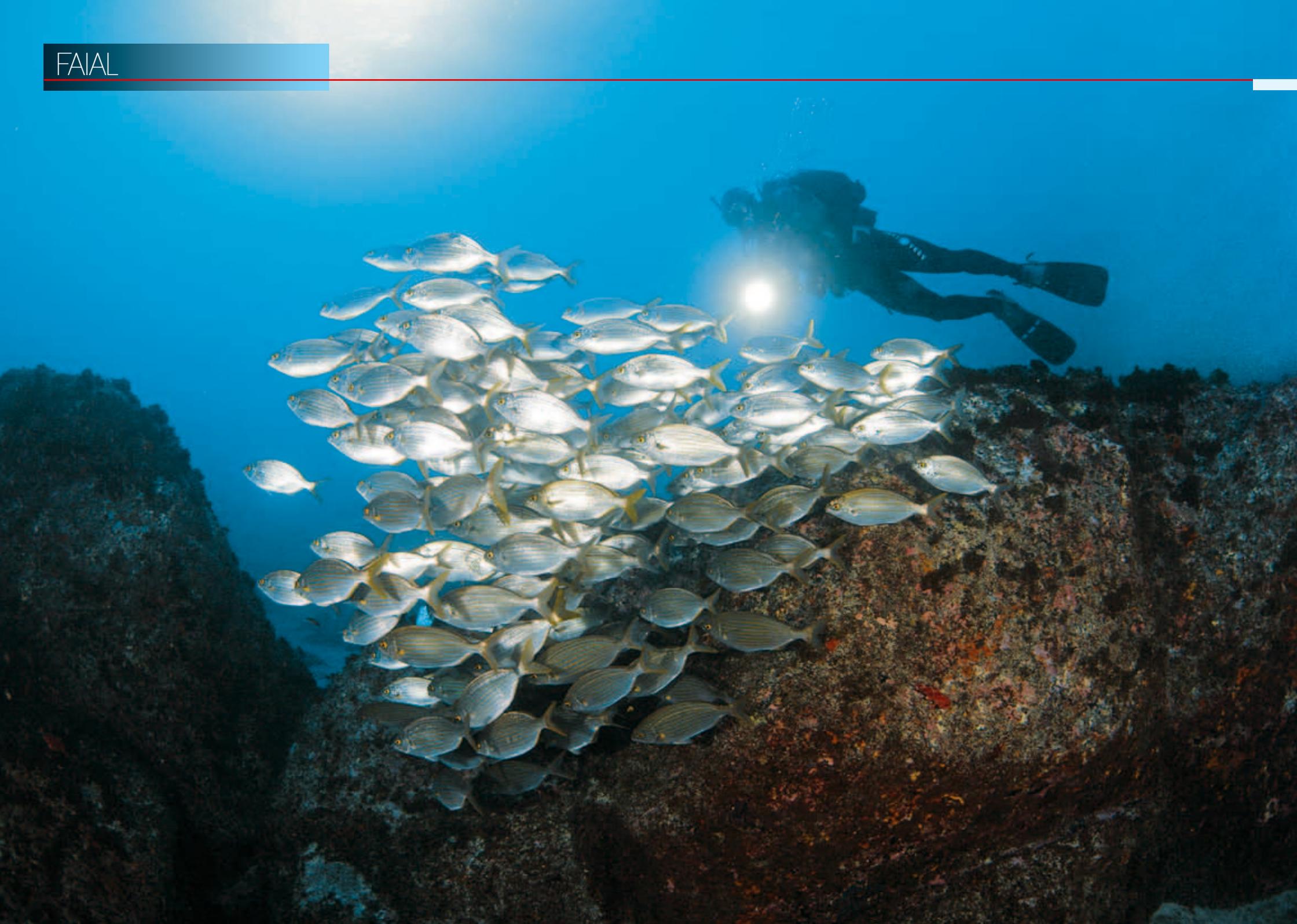
This is also an excellent zone to view large clusters of passerby fish, such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*) and some Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*).

Returning directly to the fishing port, the bottom slowly rises until the point of origin at 3 meters, where a security stop and eventual decompression landings can be carried out.



Swallowtail seaperch (*Anthias anthias*)





- ▣ Baía de Entre Montes (140)
- ▣ Baixa da Feteira (141)
- ▣ Boca das Caldeirinhas (142)
- ▣ Canhões de Entre Montes (143)
- ▣ Espalamaca Norte (144)
- ▣ Furnas do Monte da Guia (145)
- ▣ Gruta dos Camarões (146)
- ▣ Gruta e Ilhéu Negro (147)
- ▣ Monte da Guia - Radares (148)
- ▣ Pontão 16 (149)



Fayal Island is part of the “Triangle Islands” and is located just 4.5 nautical miles away from Pico Island and at 14 nautical miles from São Jorge Island. The Horta Airport not only has direct air links with Lisbon, but with the remaining islands of the archipelago. The Horta Harbour has daily boat services to Pico and São Jorge Islands, as well as regular maritime links with all islands of the archipelago during the summer months.

Upon arrival at Fayal Island, any visitor will feel how strongly this island lives “by the sea and for the sea.” It is a cultural centenary link, which takes us back to the adventures, lived by hundreds of yachtsmen that every year set sail to cross the North Atlantic Ocean. Horta’s marina is a true yachting capital of this hemisphere, with its unique contrast of sailing boats, their masts sheltered in a small bay embraced by the green Mount Guia. Today, the walls and footpath at the marina show a colourful mosaic of thousands of sailing ships that throughout the years sought shelter in this port-of-call. They all left behind a mark of their stay in allegoric paintings, which form a true open-air museum, constantly renovated in line with the imagination of the sailors that call in at the port.

With an overwhelming view of the marina and with the backdrop of the Pico Mountain the famous “Peter Café Sport” is a mandatory stopover for any visitor. One can also find there, the unmistakable links between the island and yachting, with hundreds of flags and mementos filling up every spot on its walls, as souvenirs left behind by intrepid sailors that sought shelter in this house throughout the years.

On the other hand, the landscape moulded by the volcanic eruption of Capelinhos at the western end of the island is a unique attraction requiring a mandatory visit and bringing us back to the history of the last eruption in the Azores, back in 1957/1958. These geological formations, together with the Capelinhos Volcano Interpretation Centre, provide an exclusive place to visit. There, one can figure out the emerging process of these islands on the Atlantic Ocean. Also worth a visit is the Fayal Caldera, a magnificent volcanic cone with a crater of over 1,000 metres in diameter and a depth of 400 metres. It is an outstanding place to trek around the Caldera, surrounded by the scenery of Pico and São Jorge islands.

Due to its proximity to the other “Triangle Islands,” Fayal Island provides a chance to have diversified dives. Apart from those alongside the coastal shores of Fayal Island, with a special emphasis on the dives around Mount Guia, it is possible to have dives relatively at hand on the Chanel between Fayal and Pico, as well as on the west coast of Pico Island or even at Rosais Reef in São Jorge. On the other hand, this island is a departing point to the Princess Alice Bank, due to its proximity to what many consider the best diving spot in the archipelago of the Azores. There, it is quite common to encounter large shoals of pelagic fish, Chilean Devil Ray or even sharks.

BAÍA DE ENTRE MONTES

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 20m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



At a distance of approximately 5 minutes by boat from the port of Horta is located the Baía de Entre Montes, formed by a shallow cove, relatively sheltered from winds and currents, allowing for an easy and accessible dive for less-experienced and nighttime divers.

Initiating the dive along the wall of the Monte da Guia, the cliff gently drops to 7 meters deep, increasing progressively in depth. As early as this shallower zone, it is possible to observe a marine life quite abundant in species such as Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), White sunbreams (*Diplodus sargus*), and diverse eel species.

Once the diver reaches the zone where the bottom is formed by large slabs that reach the sandy bottom at 15 meters, we find small invertebrates such as Jewel anemone (*Corynactis viridis*) of fabulous colors, Hermit crabs (*Calcinus tubalis* and *Dardanus callidus*), and Colorful nudibranchs. As far as the sandy bottom is concerned, it is abundant in species, often furtive, such as Atlantic lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*), Wide-eyed flounders (*Bothus podas maderensis*), and Cleaver wrasse (*Xyrichtys novacula*), as well as striped Red mullets (*Mullus surmuletus*) and Axillary sunbreams (*Pagellus acarne*).

Continuing on to 20 meters, the deepest part of the dive, it is still possible to see Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and some stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) with some frequency.

Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*)

BAIXA DA FETEIRA

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 30 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth

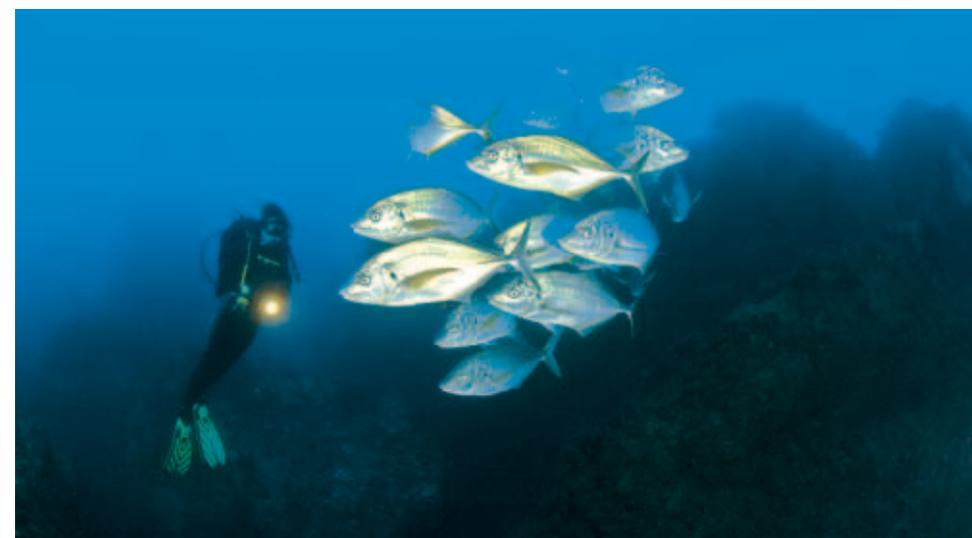


Difficulty



Feteira Reef is located on the south coat of Fayal Island, a 30-minute boat ride from Horta Harbour, slightly eastwards of Feteira Islets. Its bottom rises suddenly from 30 to 12 metres depth, making it an ideal spot for the observation of various pelagic fish such as Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyrna viridensis*) and Atlantic Bonito (*Sarda sarda*), which normally surround the crown of the Reef. Along the top and walls of this Reef there are gaps filled by many specimens of Muraena as Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) and Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), together with Common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) and Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*).

The highest depth is on southern side of this Reef at 32 metres. There, one can watch an inquisitive resident Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*) and large areas filled with European fan worm (*Sabella spallanzanii*). The maximum depth on the northern side of the Reef is 24 metres. All the surrounding bottom is made up of large dimension rocky boulders and sand, with the typical species of this type of bottom: Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), Striped red mullet (*Mullus surmuletus*), Guinean pufferfish (*Sphoeroides marmoratus*) and Common eagle ray (*Myliobatis Aquila*).

School of Jackfish (*Pseudocaranx dentex*)

BOCA DAS CALDEIRINHAS

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 7m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



This dive is done in the zone of Protected Landscapes of Monte da Guia, approximately 10 minutes by boat from the port of Horta. This dive is carried out in the opening of the volcanic crater of Monte da Guia, that connects to the ocean in its southern extremity, in the “Boca das Caldeirinhas,” since the access to the bay is not permitted due to its legal status as an Integral Natural Reservation.

The extremity of the bay presents a platform at approximately 10 meters deep, where species typical to the Azorean depths are abundant, such as Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) of great dimensions. The rocky formation continues to decline to the south to about 28-30 meters where we can observe a Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) of great dimensions with regularity, as well as a small cave with magnificent showing of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*), normally surrounded by several dozen Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), as well as the occasional Red hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*). The wall continues its inclination until reaching the sandy bottom, at 50 meters deep.

At the end of the route, the diver can invert directions, to the Northwest, continuing between diverse crevices or canyons, where it is possible to observe Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), and Greater locust lobsters (*Scyllarides latus*).



Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)

CANHÕES DE ENTRE MONTES

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 19m (mín.), 22m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The dive at Canhões de Entre Montes is located just 5 minutes by boat from the marina of Horta, next to the eastern coast of the Monte da Guia, near the diving locale Entre Montes.

Various cannons and other historical remains are the major attraction of this spot. They were removed by a team of archaeologists from the Bay of Horta Harbour, during the year 2009, and subsequently placed here in order to avoid their destruction during the works of enlargement of the harbour.

At a depth of 22 metres, there are three large boulders on a sandy bottom. They measure around 3-4 metres high and 10-15 metres long. When approaching the rocky formation it is possible to sight Round stingray (*Taeniura grabata*), Diamond lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*) and Wide-eyed flounder (*Bothus podas*). In the water column, there are, normally, numerous shoals of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*) and White seabream (*Diplodus sargus*). Close to the rocks there are great numbers of Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*) as well as many Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*) between gaps and recesses.

This is also an appropriate place to see some less common species as the Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*), not very common at such a depth. During some periods of the year, there are large groups of Sooty sea hare (*Aplysia fasciata*) swimming graciously by the bottom.



Cannon

ESPALAMACA NORTE

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Horta Harbour.
Depth: 6m (mín.), 14m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Espalamarca North diving spot is located north of the Horta Marina, just next to Almojarife Beach, a 10-15 minute boat ride. Protected by Espalamarca Point, this dive does not require much experience since it is located in a sheltered area with moderate depths, between 6 and 14 metres.

The dive offers a large diversity of marine life among the large rounded boulders that progressively drop until they reach a sandy bottom.

On the rocky area we can watch many Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) and Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) among the gaps created by the extremely large boulders. As it gets deeper, there are plenty of Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), shoals of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*), Peacock wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*) and Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*).

Once reached a depth of 12-14 metres there is a curious vulcanological phenomenon to be observed: small air bubbles coming from the sandy bottom. In this area, we can see many species, typical of sandy bottoms, such as Common stingray (*Dasyatis pastinaca*), Wide-eyed flounder (*Bothus podas*) and Diamond lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*).

Rainbow wrasse (*Coris julis*) and Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*)



FURNAS DO MONTE DA GUIA

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Horta Harbour.
Depth: 8m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Mount Guia Hot Springs are on the slope of Mount Guia, a protected landscape area between Porto Pim Beach and Horta Marina, a 10-minute boat ride from the marina. They are two large caverns whose entrance is around a depth of 20-24 metres and only 50 metres apart, enabling a visit to both during a single dive.

The highlight of this dive is the visit to both caverns, although the sea bottom outside them, at around 30 metres depth, has a variety of the typical species of the Azorean sea bottom. They are the Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*), Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), shoals of Yellowmouth barracuda (*Sphyraena viridensis*), Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*) as well as some branches of Black coral (*Antipathella wollastoni*).

Initiating the dive in the cavern located in the west, whose bottom is situated at 20 meters, and after passing its narrow and elongated entrance, we find a narrow corridor of approximately 1.5 meters in width that gives access to a chamber of great dimensions, submerged in almost complete darkness. Exploring the walls of the cavern, we can spot Spiral tube worms (*Sabella spallanzanii*), Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*) and various species of starfish and nudibranchs.

Coming out of the first cavern and moving westwards towards the second, you can dive down to 24 metres to visit a small shipwreck.

Those with low air consumption can also visit a second cavern, at approximately 50 metres from the first, with a structure and marine life very similar to the first one.



GRUTA DOS CAMARÕES

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 34m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Shrimp Cave is located on the slope of Mount Guia, a protected landscape area, between Porto Pim Beach and Horta Marina, a 10-minute boat ride from the marina. This deep dive inside a cave is only advisable to experienced divers.

The entrance to the cave is located at around a depth of 35 metres. Its narrow entrance leads to an even narrower corridor of approximately one meter width between vertical rock walls. The 25-metre long corridor with its rolled gravel bottom ends on a large chamber at a depth of 30 metres.

Right at the entrance of the cave, along the corridor and within the chamber, it is possible to observe a large quantity of small Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*) covering the walls. Inside the ample chamber, we can see Conger eel (*Conger conger*) of large dimensions, small nudibranchs of various species and even, occasionally, pelagic fish of large size such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*).

At the end of the dive, we can continue to the left side upon leaving the cave, rising to 8-10 meters, to eventual decompression landings and a security stop with the opportunity to observe small groups of pelagic fish.



GRUTA E ILHÉU NEGRO

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 20m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



This diving spot is 15 minutes by boat from the port of Horta on the northeastern slope of the Monte da Guia, close to the Ilhéu Negro, approximately 500 meters from the Porto Pim beach, and part of the protected area of Monte da Guia.

You have two alternatives for this dive, a more detailed visit to the cave of the Black Islet and its surroundings or including the islet in the dive by going 100 metres south-westwards of the cave.

The dive is initiated on the slope of Monte da Guia, in front of the entrance to the cave of Ilhéu Negro, where, between lava drains, one can observe some pelagic species, such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), Red hogfish (*Balistes capriscus*) and Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*). Following in direction to the sandy bottom, we find a long, narrow crevice that, once passed, gives access to an impressive chamber of great dimensions. Although the cave presents some diversity in terms of fauna, such as Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*), Cardinal fish (*Apogon imberbis*), nudibranchs and starfish, its principal point of interest is the observation of the backlight provoked by the solar rays penetrating the narrow entrance in the darkness of the cave.

Leaving the cave, the diver will be able to continue in direction to the Ilhéu Negro, that consists of two large blocks laid next to each other, that rise from approximately 18 meters deep until the surface.

Nudibranch - Zebra Doris
(*Hypselodoris picta azorica*)



MONTE DA GUIA - RADARES

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Barco, 5 minutos do Porto da Horta.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 30m (máx.)

Type of Dive:



RATING

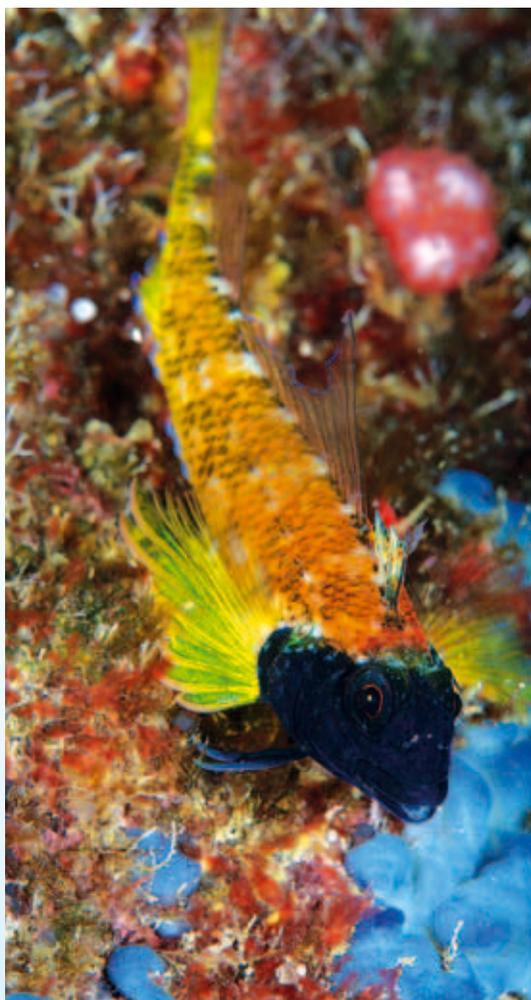
Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Located on the eastern slope of Mount Guia, the dive at Radars is quite close to “Bay between Mounts” and “Cannons between Mounts.” It belongs to the protected area of Mount Guia, a 5-minute boat ride from Horta Harbour. Quite often, it has a strong sea current since it is located at one end of Mount Guia, outside the sheltered Bay between Mounts and facing the Fayal-Pico Channel.

The bottom of this locale consists, in its majority, of rocks and large slabs, with some zones of the bottom with a rock and sand mixture, and may reach depths superior to 30 meters.

The fauna species typical to the Azorean archipelago are abundant in this zone, including Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), and large clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), as well as Black moray (*Muraena augusti*), typically open-mouthed amongst the spaces between stones.

With the increase in depth, the extensions of sand also increase, making it possible to observe Wide-eyed flounders (*Bothus podas maderensis*) and Atlantic lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*), as well as the occasional Common stingray (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) and various species of pelagic fish such as Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*) and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyraena viridensis*).

Black-faced blenny (*Tripterygion delaisi*)

PONTÃO 16

FAIAL

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from Horta Harbour.

Depth: 21m (mín.), 26m (máx.)

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Pontoon 16 is a 17-metre wide and 40-metre long barge that was sunk in 2003, next to Almojarife Beach. It is a 10-minute boat ride from Horta Marina.

This structure lies on the sandy bottom at around a depth of 26 metres with its higher end at a depth of 21 metres. Whilst it is a fairly recent shipwreck it already became considerably covered up by algae and sponge. Although it does not have a much-diversified marine life, the species sighted appear in large numbers.

The barge platform seems to acquire a new life due to the numerous White seabream (*Diplodus sargus*) in large shoals moving around with agitated movements across the whole structure. The water column is filled with an inquisitive shoal of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*).

It is not advisable to penetrate inside the structure. However, along the platform there are some peculiar structures: the large pulleys that were once part of the barge's winches and cranes. On the sandy bottom surrounding the wreck there are Blacktail comber (*Serranus atricauda*), a regular presence along the structure, together with Round stingray (*Taeniura grabata*), Wide-eyed flounder (*Bothus podas*) and Diamond lizardfish (*Synodus saurus*).

School of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

FLORES



- ▣ Baixa do Amigo (154)
- ▣ Baixa do Morro (155)
- ▣ Baixa Rasa (156)
- ▣ Catedral (157)
- ▣ Gruta do Galo (158)
- ▣ Gruta dos Enxaréus (159)
- ▣ Ilhéu do Garajau (160)
- ▣ Ponta da Caveira (161)



Known for its gorgeous landscapes, the island of Flores is the western-most point of Europe, separate from its neighbor island, Corvo, by just 13 miles. There are flights to this island from Corvo, Terceira, Faial, and São Miguel. Throughout the year, there are maritime connections to the island of Corvo, as well as to the rest of the islands in the summer months.

Although it is impossible to elect an island as having the most beautiful landscapes of the archipelago, Flores is, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful, covered by thousands of blue and white hydrangea that divide the green fields and that surround the island's streams and lakes.

Innumerable waterfalls break up the green slopes that fall in direction of the sea, many of them with origin in the seven volcanic craters that turned into lakes. Perhaps the most memorable landscape of the island is the Lagoa das Patas, accessible by a small walk through closed vegetation that ends with an impressive lake, fed by dozens of small waterfalls that fall from the surrounding steep slopes.

The swimming zone of Fajã Grande is also known, not just for its natural pools of transparent water, but also for the various waterfalls that serve as a backdrop to the small village. Among the waterfalls, the Poço do Bacalhau - an impressive waterfall where it is possible to swim in the waters that falls from hundreds of meters high - stands out.

In the more elevated zones that occupy the center of the island, there exist various lakes that deserve a visit, such as the Caldeira Funda and the Caldeira Rasa, among various others. Another ex-libris of this island what is called the Rocha dos Bordões, a large geological formation characterized by enormous columns of basalt, similar to the Giant's Causeway in Ireland.

The majority of the visitors to Flores opt to make an excursion to the island of Corvo, which offers exceptional landscapes, with a climb to the top of the crater that occupies a large part of this island.

Flores island presents a large variety of diving spots along its magnificent, jagged coast, with sheltered bays, caves, crevices, and caverns of large dimensions, called "Cathedrals" by local inhabitants.

Among some of the most known diving spots of this island, there is the Gruta do Galo, a magnificent dive carried out in a cave with two exits that provide for unique snippets of light and where divers can emerge under a fresh-water waterfall.

Beyond the innumerable diving spots that this island possess, its relative proximity to the island of Corvo permits that one also visits the diving spots of the neighbor island, especially the mythical locale, Caneiro dos Meros.

Hyperbaric chamber of the island of Flores
Status - Operational
 Centro de Saúde de Sta. Cruz das Flores
 Largo 25 de Abril - Sta. Cruz das Flores
 9970-312 Sta. Cruz das Flores
 Tel. (+351) 292 590 270

Distance from the hyperbaric chamber to the closest island

13 nautical miles (Sea rescue)

ILHA

Corvo

BAIXA DO AMIGO

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 15 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 12m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa do Amigo is situated in front of the Lomba port, 200 meters from the eastern coast of Flores island, and approximately 2.5 miles from the port of Santa Cruz.

This drop is formed by large rocky blocks that, as the depth increases, give way to a landing formed by slabs at different depths, which are excellent locations for the observation of pelagic fish.

Above the slabs located between 15 and 25 meters deep, we find the ideal place for the motionless diver to observe the principal attraction of this dive: the passage of clusters of various species "in the blue." It is possible to observe clusters of Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena viridensis*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Atlantic bonitas (*Sarda sarda*), and Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), among many other species that are possible to spot in this location. To make the dive more interesting, one can many times observe the interaction between the clusters of pelagic fish and dense "balls" of Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*). Between the large rocks and above the slabs, more common species are abundant, such as Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Guinean puffers (*Sphoeroides marmoratus*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*).



School of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

BAIXA DO MORRO

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 60m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa do Morro is situated a little less than two miles from the port of Lajes, on the southern coast of Flores island, approximately one nautical mile from the coast, in front of the Fajã de Lopo Vaz.

In a zone subject to strong currents, this drop is formed by a volcanic cone with a peak at 6 meters deep, where one can observe accentuated slopes. On the southern side, the depth can reach approximately 60 meters and, on the northern side, little less than 40 meters deep.

For the observation of large clusters of pelagic fish, the great attraction of this locale, it is recommendable that the diver approaches the extremities of the drop, to the east or the west, between 15 and 25 meters. At these points of large declivity, one can contemplate diverse clusters of pelagic fish, such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyaena viridensis*), Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), Jacks (*Seriola spp.*) and Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), as well as large "balls" of Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*).

The dive can continue until 35 meters in depth, where there is a large cavern with walls covered in Unicorn shrimp (*Plesionika narval*) and usually a large school of White trevallies. In the surrounding proximities, there is a small cave, also with Narwal shrimp, where it is common to find a Dusky grouper or a Conger eel (*Conger conger*) of exceptional dimensions.



Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

BAIXA RASA

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Fajã Grande.

Depth: 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa Rasa is located two nautical miles from the port of Fajã Grande on the north-western coast of the island of Flores, 500 meters from the coast, and presents a small islet at the surface, that drops to little more than 30 meters deep.

In a zone subject to strong currents, the dive's initial decline is carried out along the drop that abruptly falls until approximately 27 meters deep. At this depth, the base of the drop is formed by rocky blocks and round pebbles, of small and medium dimensions. The bottom is covered by a dense carpet of Brown alga (*Zonaria tournefortii*) above the rocky blocks interrupted by small sand clearings. Some times, one can observe Black moray (*Muraena augusti*) hiding among this brown alga that can reach 20 centimeters in height.

Throughout the entire course, the diver is accompanied by curious Planehead filefish (*Stephanolepis hispidus*), while at the bottom one can observe Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Wrasses (ex: *Labrus bergylta*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*), and colorful Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*).

The most western side of the drop is the ideal place to see large clusters of pelagic fish "in the blue," such as Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyræna viridensis*), Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*), and Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*).

Mediterranean moray (*Muraena Helena*)

CATEDRAL

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 2 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 6m (mín.), 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The dive at Catedral is located very close to the exit of the port of Santa Cruz, just two minutes by boat. Despite the proximity of the port, this is a dive of great quality and interest, both in terms of visible species and landscape.

The highest point of the bottom is located at an ideal depth to finalize the dive, varying between 6 and 8 meters, and full of small inhabitants, such as eels and octopi. From the highest point of the drop, the bottom abruptly falls to a large crevice with the bottom at approximately 20 meters deep. This crevice gives access to a cave of great dimensions on the northern side and a large arch on the southern side. The sandy bottom cave is full of small branch clusters of Black coral (*Antipathes wollastoni*) and offers an exceptional landscape, with the large arch visible a few meters from the exit.

Continuing south, through the arch, the bottom drops once again, until approximately 30 meters deep, where it is possible to see Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*) of considerable dimensions. The diver then returns to the initial diving point by means of the vertical wall.



GRUTA DO GALO

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 8m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

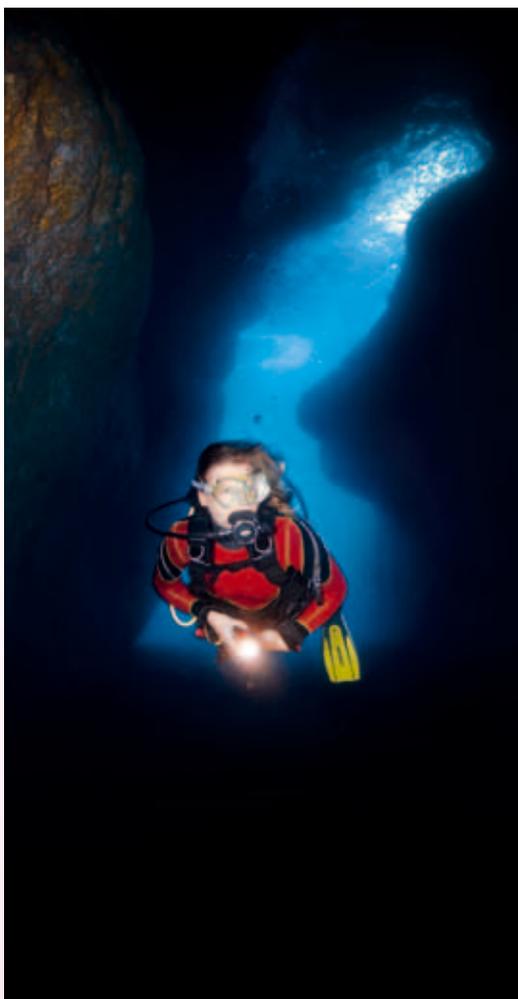
Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The famous Gruta do Galo is situated on the eastern coast of Flores island, 4 nautical miles to the north of the port of Santa Cruz. The beauty of this dive begins in the trip to the diving spot, where one can observe innumerable caves, caverns, and small islets, ending in a cave and enormous crevice, separated by a fresh-water waterfall where the dive is initiated.

The initial drop is carried out next to the waterfall, in direction of a long cavern with two entrances, many times fill by large stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*), motionless above the sandy bottom, as well as schools of small fish, that create an impressive effect with the snippets of crystal blue serving as a background.

Leaving the cave, the bottom increases in depth until 25 meters, and consists of rocky blocks. Among these blocks, an ample cavern, with two entrances generally occupied by a cluster of large Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) is formed.

Along the entire route, it is possible to observe the species typical to Azorean waters, while between the holes formed by the rocks, one can find Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) and diverse eel species.

The rise, and the security landing, can be effectuated underneath a waterfall, offering the diver a unique experience upon reaching the surface, being received by its fresh and cool water.

GRUTA DOS ENXARÉUS

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 8m (mín.), 23m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Gruta dos Enxarés is located just 15 minutes by boat from the port of Santa Cruz and is a quite interesting dive due to the variety of species and environments that can be seen in just one dive.

The dive is initiated from outside of the cave, in a small natural bay that offers protection from currents and undulation, and where it is possible to spot small clusters of pelagic fish such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Guelly jacks (*Pseudocaranx dentex*), and Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*).

The most interesting part of this dive, however, is the visit to a grandiose cave whose broad entrance is divided in two long corridors with more than 30 meters in length. These corridors are formed by vertical stone walls with a sandy bottom, and become more narrow as one penetrates the darkness, with zones just 1.5 meters wide.

Beyond the abundant quantity of small species such as nudibranchs and shrimp, the high point of this dive are the majestic stingrays that patrol both corridors, many times in groups of more than half a dozen.



Common stingray (*Dasyatis pastinaca*)

ILHÉU DO GARAJAU

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 30m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The small Ilhéu do Garajau is situated 2 nautical miles from the port of Santa Cruz, on the eastern coast of Flores island, approximately 400 meters from the coast.

The initial drop is carried out along the rocky wall of the islet that, on the western side, slowly increases in depth, forming a “wall” between the northern and southern sides of the islet where, between crevices, it is common to see large eels of diverse species.



Following the wall to the east, the diver descends and may go to the deepest zone, that is located at approximately 30 meters deep, alternating between large rocky formations and sand. Throughout the route, the diver can observe the different species typical to dives in Azorean waters, such as Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), Madeira rockfish (*Scorpaena maderensis*), Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*) and clusters of Salema (*Sarpa salpa*). This is also an excellent location to observe curious Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), many times spotted on this dive, while the diver also observes the clusters of various species that surround the rock, just as Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*), and large clusters of Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*) that surround the divers in this steep wall scenery.

Black moray (*Muraena augusti*)

PONTA DA CAVEIRA

FLORES

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the port of Santa Cruz.

Depth: 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Ponta da Caveira is situated on the eastern coast of Flores island, approximately 1.5 nautical miles from the port of Santa Cruz, forming a small natural bay.

This diving spot presents diverse crevices and caves in the wall, formed by large lava tubes beginning next to the coast on the wall of Ponta da Caveira, until the bottom that is located at approximately 17 meters deep. Continuing the route to the east, always along the rocky wall, the depth rises to a maximum of 25 meters.

Throughout the course of the dive, the divers are, generally, accompanied by clusters of curious grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*) while they observe the different resident species, such as the clouds of Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), Canary damsels (*Abudefduf luridus*), Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*), Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*), Rainbow wrasses (*Coris julis*), and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), bestowing the bottom with a colorful tones. Along the route, one finds, at times, clusters of Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and other pelagic fish “in the blue,” as well as young Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidoiplois scrofa*) above the bottom.

In the rocky wall, there exist diverse crevices. In some of them, one can observe Conger eels (*Conger conger*) of great dimensions, as well as Black morays (*Muraena augusti*) and Forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), amidst small agglomerations of colorful cardinal fish (*Apogon imberbis*).



Red scorpion-fish (*Scorpaena scrofa*)

CORVO



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- ▣ Baixa do Buraco (167)
- ▣ Caneiro dos Meros (168)
- ▣ Gamela (169)
- ▣ Moldinho (170)



Corvo island, the smallest of the archipelago with just 400 inhabitants, presents an area of just 17 km². It is situated approximately 13 nautical miles from its neighboring island, Flores. There are two ways to get to this island: by plane, with connections to the island of Flores, Faial, and Terceira, or by maritime connection from Flores.

The island is formed by an extinct volcano that presents a large crater 300 meters deep, called the “Caldeirão,” which constitutes one of the most memorable landscapes of the archipelago.

Inside the crater, one can observe two lakes from which various small islets emerge. Green slopes full of hydrangea that abruptly fall to the sea surround the lakes.

The only populated area of the island, Vila do Corvo, is on the southern coast, about an extensive lavic “fajã,” with a view of Flores island. Its tight roads that weave between traditional white houses give a picturesque aspect to this small village.

A boat trip around the island, as well as the boat connection to Flores, is an unforgettable experience, allowing for the observation of marvelous and inaccessible landscape, as well as a large number of marine birds and, sometimes, dolphins and whales.



Curiously, the smallest island of the archipelago is also one of the most sought out for bird watching, where, beyond the most common birds, such as garajaus, cagarros, and wood pigeons, it is also possible to spot various migratory birds from North America that are searching for food in this small point in the middle of the ocean, while they rest from their long crossing.

This island is an example in the history of the Natural Reservations of the Archipelago of the Azores, since it was the first and only island constituting a Voluntary Reservation. Thanks to the existence of the reservation, today it is possible to dive mere centimeters from various Dusky groupers of great size, some weighing more than 30 pounds, just a few dozen meters from the port. The small population of this island, which translated into reduced fishing efforts, makes the dives in this locale ones of unique richness and biodiversity. It is important to stress that this island makes up the Natural Regional Park of Corvo, which begins on land and extends to the sea, until 3 miles from the coast, forming an area of environmental conservation around the island.

BAIXA DA PONTA DO MARCO

CORVO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 20 minutes from the port of Vila do Corvo.
Depth: 22m (mín.), 44m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa da Ponta do Marco is located approximately 400 meters from the coast, at the northeastern point of Crovo island, in front of a steep cliff to which its owes its name. It is this island's diving spot furthest from the port.

Due to its remote location on the smallest island of the Azores, this is an excellent locale both for the observation of large clusters of pelagic fish as well as a large quantity of deep-water fish. Its localization subject to strong currents, along with elevated depths, makes this spot, however, only recommendable for experienced divers.

The top of the drop, between 20 and 25 meters, is quite ample and falls vertically. This zone is full of life and we can observe species like Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), large Comb groupers (*Mycteroperca fusca*), and motionless stingrays (*Dasyatis pastinaca*) above the bottom, and diverse eel species within the crevices.

Reaching the point of the drop that falls to 44 meters, it is possible to spot large clusters of species "in the blue," such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Atlantic bonitos (*Sarda sarda*) and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*).

Comb grouper (*Mycteroperca fusca*)



BAIXA DO BURACO

CORVO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 5 minutes from the port of Vila do Corvo.
Depth: 7m (mín.), 25m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The Baixa do Buraco is situated just 250 meters to the southwest of the port of Vila do Corvo. This drop that emerges from 25 meters to 7 meters deep is surrounded by a sandy bottom, aggregating much life around it. Its name comes from the fact that in this locale there exists a hole where Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) are habitually found, hence its designation, Baixa do Buraco (Hole Drop).

Peeking from the surface on days of calm waters, it is possible for divers to observe some species more common in this area, such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*) and Grey triggerfish (*Balistes carolinensis*) that accompany the divers for the majority of the dive.

The route is carried out around the drop, where it is possible to observe a large abundance of deep water species common in the Azorean sea, as well as various eel species, Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), among other species. However, it is in the area closest to the surface that it is oftentimes possible to observe large clusters of Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*) and of pelagic fish, such as Almaco jacks, Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyrna viridensis*), and Bermuda sea chubs (*Kyphosus sectatrix*) of large dimensions.

Blue jack mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus*) and Guelly jack (*Pseudocaranx dentex*)



CANEIRO DOS MEROS

CORVO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 3 minutes from the port of Vila do Corvo.

Depth: 18m (mín.), 40m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



The famous diving spot, the Caneiro dos Meros, is situated right in front of the port of Vila do Corvo, approximately 150 meters from the coast, and is known as being the diving spot in the Azores with the greatest abundance of large and curious Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), being it possible to spot up to a dozen of these friendly giants in just one dive.

This locale is the first and only Voluntary Reservation of the Azores, created more than a decade ago through an agreement between fishers and divers. As a result, these Dusky groupers, some weighing more than 20 kilos, are accustomed to human presence, making proximity of a few centimeters between the animals and divers possible.

This diving spot is formed by lava drains with some sand clearings, that easily fall from 18 to 25 meters deep, forming various gorges, where the majority of Dusky groupers, as well as Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidoplois scrofa*) are found. Crossing the gorges in direction to the high seas, the rocky wall finds itself with a sandy bottom at 40 meters deep. While it is possible to view Dusky groupers throughout the entire circuit, the circuit should be adapted to the experience of each diver. Beyond the abundance of Dusky groupers, and given its status as a protected area, this dive also offers a great abundance of both deep-water and pelagic species common in the Azorean seas.



Dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*)

GAMELA

CORVO

GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 2 minutes from the port of Vila do Corvo.

Depth: 20m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



Gameia is situated just a few dozen meters from the coast in front of the port of Vila do Corvo. This diving spot presents varied depths and a great abundance of life. It is possible to visit two small caves on an extensive platform at approximately 8 meters deep, or explore the deeper parts surrounding the drop, at a depth of 20 meters.

All of the area closest to the surface is replete with marine life, where one can observe small clusters of various species, such as Salemas (*Sarpa salpa*), White sea breams (*Diplodus sargus cadenati*), Azores chromis (*Chromis limbata*), and Ornate wrasses (*Thalassoma pavo*), as well as Black combers (*Serranus atricauda*) and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*). Among the crevices in the rocks, one can find Brown moray (*Gymnothorax unicolor*), Black morays (*Muraena augusti*), and Fangtooth morays (*Enchelycore anatine*). In the deeper zones at the limit of the platform, one can observe pelagic fish such as Almaco jacks (*Seriola rivoliana*), Bermuda seachubs (*Kyphosus spectatrix*), and Yellowmouth barracudas (*Sphyraena viridensis*), oftentimes surrounding large clusters of Blue jack mackerels (*Trachurus picturatus*).

At the end of the dive, one returns to the top of the drop, taking advantage of the time to explore the caves, one of them especially spacious with an opening in the ceiling and walls covered in Jewel anemone (*Corynactis viridis*), and the other, a long horizontal crevice, less than 10 meters away.



GENERAL RATING



DESCRIPTION

Travel: Boat, 10 minutes from the port of Vila do Corvo.
Depth: 4m (mín.), 45m (máx.).

Type of Dive:



RATING

Marine Life



Depth



Difficulty



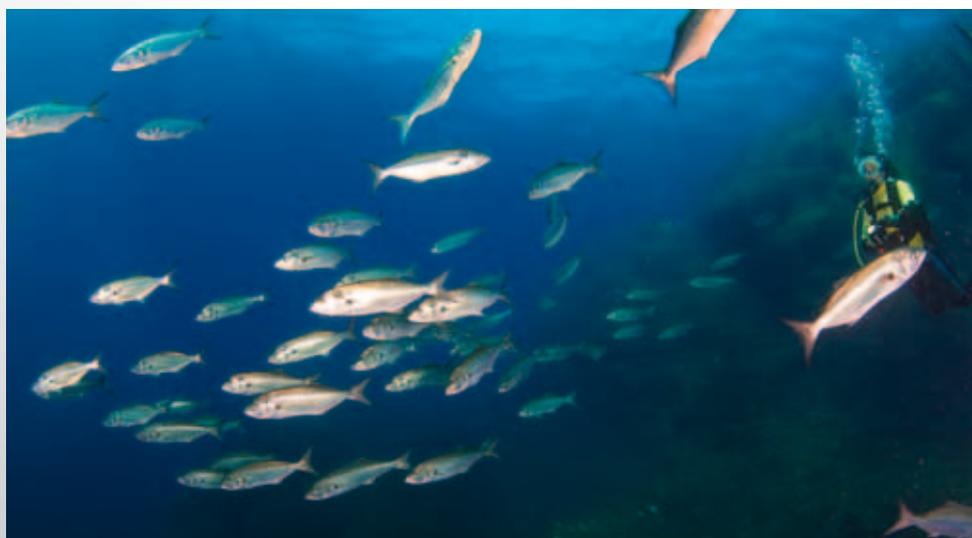
Moldinho, also known as “Pedra do Atlas,” is situated 4 nautical miles from the port of Vila do Corvo and approximately 450 meters from the coast at the northeastern extremity of the island of Corvo. This drop is actually an undersea volcanic cone that emerges from 45 meters to 4 meters deep.

Being a zone subject to currents and undulation, it is advised that the dive be done during ebb tide, with good maritime conditions and by experienced divers.

Amidst the hollows in the rocky wall that one observes upon approaching the drop, Dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*), diverse Barred hogfish (*Pseudolepidaplois scrofa*) and Parrotfish (*Sparisoma cretense*) can be observed. And if the diver looks with attention, he or she will be able to see Berried anemone (*Alicia mirabilis*) that extends its long and colorful tentacles at night.

Due to its remote location removed from the coast, this locale is ideal for the observation of large clusters of pelagic fish that appear in the deep blue that surrounds this drop. It is usual to observe large clusters of Jacks (*Seriola* spp.) and Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltator*).

The security landing can be carried out in the shallower zone, where the bottom is flat and varies between 4 and 6 meters, while observing the diversity of species that are found in this locale.

Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*)



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NATURE AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES IN THE AZORES

The Azores have exceptional conditions for nature and adventure activities. There are many opportunities for practising different activities, in a diverse landscape. The mild weather allows visiting the islands year-round and, if the conditions become less favourable, there are a number of options to explore local culture and heritage, and to taste the excellent gastronomy.

Although many activities can be carried out on all the islands, each island has its particular niches. Flores is excellent for hiking, boating, diving and canyoning; Corvo is known for diving and bird watching; Faial has sailing and whale and dolphin watching; Graciosa is good for scuba diving; Pico has mountain climbing and whale and dolphin watching; São Jorge has spectacular hiking trails, surfing and canyoning; and Terceira offers interesting boat tours, geotourism and golf. In the Western Group, in São Miguel, geotourism, whale watching and hiking are particularly important and in Santa Maria, the best activities are boat trips and diving.

The requirements for participating in each activity are distinct, though most activities are accessible to anyone who wishes to begin or to simply have a new and unforgettable experience. For those who are more experienced, there are also numerous opportunities. Visitors wishing to carry out activities individually should confirm that they have adequate credentials and competence, the appropriate equipment, as well as the necessary information about the local conditions, in order to avoid undesired incidents. Hiring service providers, either guides or local specialists, is recommended to visitors. This both improves the safety of the activities and gives the visitor an opportunity to discover the secrets of the islands and to learn about the local environment and culture. All islands have nature and adventure tourism service providers, though the available activities differ, as shown in the following table. A list of tourism agencies and companies is included in the last section of this guide.

Source: Silva, Francisco, Céu, Maria, Guide for Nature and Adventure Tourism, 4th edition, Regional Association for Tourism

This guide can be downloaded at the following link:

http://en.artazores.com/downloads/indexPCat.php?id_categoria=10





SCIENTIFIC NAME

COMMON NAME

A

Abudefduf luridus
Acanthocybium solandri
Alicia mirabilis
Anthias anthias
Antipathella wollastoni
Apogon imberbis
Arbacia lixula
Atherina presbyter

Canary damsel
Wahoo
Alicia mirabilis
Swallowtail seaperch
Black coral
Cardinal fish
Black sea urchin
Sand smelt

B

Balistes capriscus
Boops boops
Bodianus scrofa
Bothus podas maderensis
Bulweria bulwerii

Grey triggerfish
Bogue
Red hogfish
Wide-eyed flounder
Bulwer's petrel

C

Calcinus tubularis
Caranx crysos
Carcharhinus galapagensis
Carcharhinus longimanus
Caretta caretta
Charonia lampas
Chelon labrosus
Chromis limbata
Clavelina lepadiformis
Clavelina oblonga
Cliona celata
Conger conger
Coris julis
Corynactis viridis

Hermit crabs
Blue runner
Galapagos shark
Oceanic whitetip shark
Loggerhead sea turtle
Triton snail
Boxlip mullet
Azores chromis
Light-bulb tunicate
White light-bulb tunicate
Boring sponge
Conger eel
Rainbow wrasse
Jewel anemone

D

Dardanus callidus
Dasyatis pastinaca
Diplodus sargus cadenati
Diplodus vulgaris
Discodoris atromaculata
Distaplia corolla

Hermit crabs
Common stingray
White sea bream
Common two-banded seabream
Dotted seaslug
Orange crown tunicate

SCIENTIFIC NAME

COMMON NAME

E

Echiichthys vipera
Elagatis bipinnulata
Enchelycore anatina
Epinephelus marginatus

Lesser weever
Rainbow Runner
Fangtooth moray
 Dusky grouper

G

Gymnothorax unicolor

Brown moray

H

Haliotis tuberculata
Hermodice carunculata
Holothuria forskali
Hypselodoris picta azorica

Ormer
Fire worm
Cotton spinner
Nudibranch - Zebra Doris

I

Isurus oxyrinchus

Mako shark

K

Katsuwonus pelamis
Kyphosus sectatrix

Skipjack tuna
Bermuda sea chub

L

Labrus berlgylta

Ballan wrasse

M

Macroramphosus scolopax
Maja squinado
Manta birostris
Marthasterias glacialis
Mobula tarapacana
Mola mola
Mullus surmuletus
Muraena augusti
Muraena helena
Mycteroperca fusca
Myliobatis aquila

Longspine snipefish
Spiny spider crab
Manta ray
Spiny starfish
Devil ray
Ocean sunfish
Red mullet
Black moray
Mediterranean moray
Comb grouper
Eagle ray

SCIENTIFIC NAME

COMMON NAME

O

Octopus vulgaris
Ophidiaster ophidianus

Common octopus
Purple sea-star

P

Padina pavonica
Pagellus acarne
Pagrus pagrus
Paracentrotus lividus
Parazoanthus axinellae
Pelagia noctiluca
Petrosia ficiformis
Phycis phycis
Physalia physalis
Plesionika narval
Pomatomus saltatrix
Prionace glauca
Pseudocaranx dentex

Peacock feather alga
Axillary seabream
Common bream
Rock urchin
Yellow encrusting anemone
Luminescent jellyfish

Forkbeard
Portuguese man-of-war
Unicorn shrimp
Bluefish
Blue shark
Guelly jack

R

Remora remora
Rhincodon typus

Common remora
Whale shark

S

Sabella spalanzanii
Sarda sarda
Sardina pilchardus
Sarpa salpa
Scorpaena maderensis
Scorpaena scrofa
Scyllarides latus
Seriola dumerili
Seriola rivoliana
Seriola spp.
Serranus atricauda
Sparisoma cretense
Sphaerechinus granularis
Sphoeroides marmoratus
Sphyraena viridensis

Spiral tube worm
Atlantic bonito
Sardine
Salema
Madeira rockfish
Red scorpion-fish
Greater locust lobster
Greater amberjack
Almaco jack
Jacks
Blacktail Comber
Parrotfish
Purple sea urchins
Guinean pufferfish
Yellowmouth barracuda

SCIENTIFIC NAME

COMMON NAME

Sphyrna zygaena
Stephanolepis hispidus
Symphodus caeruleus
Symphodus mediterraneus
Synodus saurus

Smooth hammerhead
Planehead filefish
Emerald wrasse
Axillary wrasse
Atlantic lizardfish

T

Taeniura grabata
Tambja ceutae
Tetrapturus albidus
Thalassoma pavo
Thunnus obesus
Trachinotus ovatus
Trachurus picturatus
Trigloporus lastoviza
Tursiops truncatus

Round stingray

White Marlin
Ornate wrasse
Bigeye tuna
Derbio
Blue jack mackerel
Streaked gurnard
Bottlenose dolphin

U

Ulva intestinalis
Ulva rigida

Gut laver
Sea-lettuce

X

Xyrichthys novacula

Cleaver wrasse



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TEXT BY

Ver Açor, Lda.

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TEXT PROOFING BY

????????

TRANSLATION

Brianna Medeiros

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Ver Açor, Lda.

Helder Segadães

IMAGE TREATMENT

Ver Açor, Lda.

Paulo Cabral

PRE-PRINT_PRINTING

Selecior-Artes Gráficas

ISSUE

2.000 exemplares

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