



AZORES'17

CCA AZORES CRUISE

JULY 22-29, 2017

CRUISE INFORMATION



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COMMODORE'S LETTER



James G. Binch
Commodore

May 2017

Greetings to all fellow Azorean Cruise Mates:

Suzie and I would like to welcome you to what we expect will be an eye-opening cruise into the unique topography and culture of an island archipelago which we sailors have passed through so many times, without taking the time to really see and experience these marvelous islands. There is a nary a write-up I have read of those who did spend time here that did not rave about the people and natural wonder of the geography. It is for these reasons alone I thought we should adventure to this remote outpost in the Atlantic, a welcome respite from transatlantic travails for many.

Although we are relatively small in total number, we are sure the itinerary planned by Sandy Viator and Mark Rice, our Co-Chairs, will reward all of us with a memorable experience. For those coming from east or west aboard your own boats --- enjoy the journey, and above all be safe. For those of us chartering from Sail Azores, Suzie and I look forward to welcoming you in Horta on the Friday evening. The Vice Commodore and I, along with our brides, will be spending five days before the cruise in Sao Miguel (Ponta Delgada) --- the land of lakes lying down in volcanic craters --- and we hope we might see some of you there!

A special thank you to Sandy, Carol, Mark and Amy for putting in the time to make this another of the Club's memorable cruises...

A LETTER FROM THE CRUISE CHAIRMEN

Dear Cruise Participants,

We are looking forward to a week of cruising in this exotic location. It has only been in the last thirty years that cruisers from Europe have visited here with any regularity while North American cruiser visits are still relatively rare. We have a super group including present and



former CCA flag officers and enthusiastic new members. We will have the opportunity to enjoy everyone's company because of the intimate size of our group and be able to communicate daily activities either personally, by a daily 0800 VHF call, or by email. We are very fortunate to have Sailazores as our charter company; they will be totally dedicated to our group throughout the cruise as we have chartered all but one of their boats. You will have the opportunity to meet some of them at our Opening Dinner on Friday and, of course, at our Skippers' Meeting and at checkout on Saturday. Other than the four planned evenings and the island tour on Tuesday afternoon there are no other organized events giving you the opportunity to

explore the islands on your own. In all likelihood, we will be splitting the fleet for our visits to Pico and Sao Jorge because of the limited marina and mooring facilities-more on this at the Skippers' meeting. Royal Cruising Club's **Atlantic Islands** (excerpts posted on the CCA Azores cruise website) and the Sailazores'website provide much information to help you plan your visit. So, welcome to the Azores!

Mark Rice and Sandy Viator
Azores Cruise Co-Chairs



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The islands all have volcanic origins as they lie along the margins of the Eurasian and African plates and east of the mid-Atlantic ridge. Evidence exists everywhere from the massive 7,000 foot Pico Mountain; the calderas; the precipitous, harbor-less shorelines; to the stark, moonscape of Ponta dos Capelinhos on the western end of Faial the result of a massive eruption in 1957. The area can be viewed up close or from the top of the island's caldera.

The Portuguese claimed and colonized the uninhabited islands in the early 15th century. The islands' existence may have been known as early as the 6th century BC by Phoenicians and by Carthaginians. Norsemen and perhaps the Chinese according to Gavin Menzies' controversial book: **1421-The Year China Discovered the World** may have visited. The earliest reliable reference, however, dates to 1154 when an Arab explorer and geographer at the court of King Roger II of Sicily compiled a globe and manuscript that described a group of nine islands lying northwest of the Canaries. Currents and winds favoring a southwesterly track from the Mediterranean kept the Azores away from principal trade routes. Nevertheless, captains sailing for Portugal and for Prince Henry the Navigator made westerly voyages of colonization in the 1430's as Portugal was hemmed-in by their powerful

neighbor, Spain. The islands were slowly colonized as they were viewed as a barren, inhospitable outpost. Early Portuguese settlers cleared large areas of dense natural forest. Domesticated animals and wheat, oranges, sugar cane, and grape vines were imported from the continent. Little has changed in 600 years as agriculture remains the principal occupation.

Early settlers included Sephardic Jews and Flemings escaping wars, disease, and persecution. Bretons, Scots, Italians, and Irish arrived sporadically seeking better lives. Primitive grass dwelling huts eventually gave way to stone structures some of which survive today. Many Azoreans can trace their roots to the 15th century. Columbus visited Santa Maria Island on his return from the "new world" in 1493. The volcanic origins provided few natural harbors with the exception of Angra do Heroismo on Terceira that became a stopping point for voyages to and from North America. Yet, few of us would describe this harbor as protected (other than the recently constructed marina) as it is still pretty exposed to the south and east.

The islands came under Spanish control in the late 16th century upon Spain's invasion of Portugal and attracted pirates and English, French, and Venetian privateers

preying upon the Spanish galleons returning from the Americas. Spain built forts to protect the harbors at Horta and at Angra. (You may be staying in the restored Horta fort upon arrival in the Azores, and we all will gather for our mid-cruise dinner at the Angra fortifications). Spain's grip upon the islands was short-lived, and the Azores have operated somewhat independently as a province of Portugal for two centuries. Given its lack of natural, human, or geographic resources, it is not surprising that the islands were mostly ignored by European powers.

American whalers found crew in the Azores; and, after returning home, Azorean whalers hunted whales in local waters. Many, however, emigrated to New England, Bermuda, and California establishing Azorean communities in those locales that survive today. Emigration of young people seeking better economic opportunities in Europe and in North America continues.

Horta, because of its ideal mid-Atlantic location, crept into the 20th century when the town became a relay station for multiple transatlantic cables. In 1924, Western Union Telegraph Company collaborated with Spanish and Italian counterparts to lay a transatlantic cable from New York to Italy via Horta and Malaga, Spain. Peak employment connected to the cable business reached 300 people from England, the US, Germany, and Portugal making Horta one of the largest cable centers in the world. By 1969, however, employment related

to the cable business had disappeared because of changing technologies. American flying boats visited the Azores on their way to Europe in the 1930's. In World War I, Portugal joined the Allies, and US naval bases were established in the islands. In World War II, Portugal, originally neutral, broke diplomatic relations with Germany, and allowed the Allies to build air bases in Santa Maria and in Terceira. These bases enabled the Allies to protect convoys and hunt for U-boats in the mid and eastern North Atlantic. Reconnaissance flights from Lajes Field on Terceira helped the US and Portugal (a NATO member) keep track of Soviet submarines during the Cold War. The US still maintains a small presence, which facilities you can see if your flight connects through Terceira.

In 1976, the Azores became an autonomous region of Portugal with their own assembly and regional government at the same time sending five representatives to the Portuguese parliament in Lisbon. The autonomous regions were established due to their distinct geography, economy, social, and cultural characteristics as well as the historical autonomic aspirations of its island population. The Portuguese constitution still specifies a national connection obliging the island administrators to maintain national integrity and democratic principles and to promote regional interests. Nevertheless, there are occasional demands for total independence, but it is unlikely the islands' economy could support such a move.

With thanks to Wikipedia and Atlantic Islands



GENERAL INFORMATION

Refer to the Sailazores website and to **Atlantic Islands** on the CCA Azores Cruise website for supplemental details.

CRUISING GUIDES AND NAVIGATION

RCC Pilotage Foundation's **Atlantic Islands** written by Anne Hammick is generally recognized as the cruising bible for the Azores, Madeira Group, Canary Islands, and Cape Verdes. We uploaded the Azores section plus guides to the four islands we will be visiting to the CCA Azores Cruise website. RCC Pilotage Foundation's **The Atlantic Crossing Guide** serves as a companion for those sailing their own boats from North America to the Azores.

Sailazores provides on-board paper charts of the Western, Central, and Eastern island groups plus all approaches, and the boats are equipped with Raymarine chartplotters and pilot books.

WHAT TO BRING

The Azores enjoy a temperate climate-unusual for such a northerly location (roughly the same latitude as Delaware). Its distance from North America and Europe and the Gulf Stream influence

the weather conditions. Air temperature ranges from the low 60's and the mid-70's throughout the year as does the water temperature. Prepare for the higher end of the range at the end of July. Therefore, you shouldn't require more than light sweaters or a jacket and shawls for the cooler evenings. We visited the Azores in early June and experienced a few days of cloudy, damp, and cool conditions and several days of glorious sunshine. Because most of the sailing will occur in the open ocean on passages of 25 to 50 miles, pack light foul weather gear.

Bring good walking or hiking shoes to explore the towns, villages, and natural attractions, small binoculars, European AC travel adapter plugs. Sailazores provides bunk linens (pillow), a hand towel, and a beach towel. They can provide a Wi-Fi 3G router at a nominal extra charge for those who anticipate heavy usage. The marinas have good service, however. Most commercial establishments accept credit cards but let your card company know where you will be traveling. The boats seem to be very well equipped.

LANGUAGE

Many Azoreans have family or connections in the states-mostly Massachusetts and Rhode Island; and, therefore, know some English. If you hire a driver make sure he speaks passable English if you do not speak Portuguese.

BANKS/PROVISIONING/RESTAURANTS

You will find ATM's most everywhere to fill up with Euros. We recommend doing most of your provisioning in Horta as you will have two full days there at the beginning of the cruise; there is a supermarket as good as most in the states that also sells wine and liquor (no Mount Gay). It is about a fifteen-twenty minute walk from the marina area; so, walk up and take a cab back.

Do not expect any great gastronomic experiences; restaurants are fair to good and the staff is sometimes indifferent although you might get lucky. There is a wide gap between dining experiences on the continent (Italy, Greece, Croatia) and the Azores. However, you'll generally find good value for your Euro as prices are low; stay with the Azorean wines as they are good and cheap.

TRANSPORTATION

Sailazores provides transfer service from Horta Airport to the marina for charters, but if many of us arrive at the same time we will have to coordinate. For those meeting owned boats a taxi costs about 14 Euros.

The Azores offer clean and efficient airports, good roads, and convenient inter-island ferry service. It is about a forty-five minute ferry ride to nearby Pico Island from Horta, which is an alternative to visiting by boat because of the extremely limited marina facilities.

Some bus service exists in Faial and Terceira, but if you have a particular destination a taxi represents your best alternative.

COMMUNICATIONS

Cell phone service works well throughout the islands, and the hotels we visited (3-star) in Horta, Velas, and Angra had good WiFi. It is recommended that you establish an international plan prior to arriving in the Azores with your carrier. One can rent a 3G router for E10 from Sailazores who will also provide each charter yacht with a cell phone for communicating with the Sailazores base. The cruise chairmen will attempt an 0800 daily update; but given the intimate size of the fleet (eight charters and five own boats); and because most days we will be berthed in and around the same marinas



each day, we may be checking in with everyone personally.

MEDICAL

No immunizations are required though keeping vaccinations up-to-date is sensible. We found the islands bug-free when the weather was sunny. Sailazores provides a medical kit for most common emergencies. Because the sailing distances between the ports are relatively long (25-50 miles) with little or no opportunity to duck in anywhere, we urge extra care on board. Horta (Faial), Madalena (Pico), Velas (Sao Jorge), and Angra do Heroismo (Terceira) offer good hospitals and most medical personnel speak English. This is consistent with the generally good infrastructure around the islands. Should you forget some non-prescription item, pharmacies are convenient to the marinas.

Travel insurance is a personal decision as is emergency assistance insurance in the event of a serious illness or injury. We don't anticipate participating in any death-defying activities but moving about the islands by boat, automobile, or foot (hiking) may present some unexpected issues.

Sailazores will standby to arrange referrals to local medical facilities in the event of an emergency during the cruise.

WEATHER AND WIND

The Azores High dominates the weather in July; therefore, we should expect light southwesterly winds around 10 knots in the central islands. Summer temperatures are pleasant with daytime air and water temperatures in the mid-70's. Showers can appear from time to time especially at the higher elevations, but whole days of rain are rare in late July. In years when the High is weak, squally depressions pass through with winds veering from southeast to north.

The marinas post forecasts out a few days that should be adequate for our transits around the islands. See [Atlantic Islands](#) for additional information and weather sources.

FORMALITIES

Formalities are carried out at the marina or harbor offices. Expect to pay a modest overnight fee of around E20 in the marinas with the exception of Sailazores' base in Horta, which includes water, electricity, and garbage disposal.

We will provide a cruise flag (flown from the port spreader; or, alternatively, from the backstay), but for the Sailazores' boats you should bring an "Owner Aboard" flag (starboard spreader); the boats are not equipped with pigsticks.

FUEL/WATER/ELECTRICITY/PUMP-OUTS/GARBAGE

Sailazores requires that we top off the fuel tanks prior to returning the boats; the fuel dock is located just south of our slips as you enter the slip area. We did not see a fuel dock in Velas, but Angra's is located to the north as you enter the marina. The boats have at least a forty-gallon tank capacity, which should be adequate to get you to Angra and back to Horta without refueling. Local people drink the tap water and it is considered safe. But given our short stay it makes sense to stick to the bottled variety so as not to interfere with the enjoyment of the cruise.

Mains electricity is 220v/50Hz as is standard throughout mainland Europe and is provided in the archipelago's marinas. The boats are equipped with proper power cords.

We didn't note any pump-out stations, and the boats are not equipped with usable holding tanks. SA asked that we use the marina facilities. Once outside, you are in the open ocean. The marinas provide suitable garbage bins.

BERTHING/MOORING

Sailazores expects us to berth their boats in the marinas or anchor in the immediate, surrounding area as there are no naturally protected harbors. Man-made breakwaters protect the marinas,

but the contiguous anchorages are subject to ocean swells and to boat wakes. Sailazores will suggest anchorages for lunch, swimming, and snorkeling near the marinas.

LAUNDRY/SHOWERS

In Horta, facilities exist at the north end of the marina; and, in Angra, at the western end, but we cannot attest to their functionality or cleanliness.

LAYING UP/BOATYARDS

We observed facilities in Horta, Angra, and Ponta Delgada; all have at least twenty-ton travel lifts. Horta's space seemed limited relative to the others. [Atlantic Islands](#) reports that many foreign yachts lay-up ashore at Praia da Vitoria on the eastern side of Terceira because of their competent staff and good prices. Those considering a lengthy stay should be aware of EU VAT and any local Portuguese rules.

Dan Biemesderfer (ESS) and Carter Bacon (BOS) diverted to Horta during the 2015 Transatlantic Race for repairs and can be a resource for those who wish to pursue the subject further.



ITINERARY

Refer to Sailazores' "Suggested Itineraries from Horta" (Between the Central Group of Islands) included in their cruise package, which supplements our Cruise Guide.

FRIDAY, JULY 21

Settle into into your onshore accommodations and assemble at 1930 for our Opening Dinner and entertainment at Restaurante Genuino, about a ten-minute walk south from the marina on Rua Nova. Genuino, the proprietor, has completed two circumnavigations, and his route is displayed prominently on a mural in our dining area. We'll feel right at home here. We will provide an update on the next day's schedule. Dress-Casual.

SATURDAY, JULY 22

The Skippers' meeting is scheduled for 1000 at the Faial Resort Hotel; we recommend two from each boat as the space is limited. For the charterers, the boats will not be ready until about 1400 at which time Sailazores will begin the check-out process. Those crew members not involved with the Skippers' Meeting and/or check-out can do a little island sightseeing until around 1400 when Sailazores recommends that the other crew members go about provisioning.

Join us for hors d'oeuvres and drinks between 1800-2000 at the world-famous Peter Café Sport opposite the marina. This evening, you are on your own for dinner; so, explore Horta at night. SA recommends Genuino (we'll kick off the cruise there on Friday night), Café Sport, and Canto da Doca.

SUNDAY, JULY 23

Set sail for Sao Jorge or for Pico. We expect to divide the fleet into two and will make that call at the Skippers' meeting. One group proceeds to Velas and the second group splits into three harbors on Pico-Madalena, Sao Roque, or Lajes as each harbor can accommodate only two of our boats. **Atlantic Islands** provides excellent description of the harbors, entrances, dangers, facilities, etc.

The guide recommends using a trip line if at anchor around Sao Roque and Lajes because of the rocky, sandy bottoms.

The four- hour sail to either Sao Jorge or Pico allows an afternoon to explore these ports. Have dinner aboard or discover a

local restaurant.

MONDAY, JULY 24

Get underway early and proceed to Angra do Heroismo on Terceira about 50 miles from Sao Jorge and Pico. As Monday promises to be a long day at sea, plan to eat dinner aboard or find a restaurant within a few blocks of the marina.

Hail the harbormaster on channel 09 who will direct you to your slip. He is expecting our group.

TUESDAY, JULY 25

We have organized an island tour for the group beginning at about 1300 which will conclude at about 1700.

At 1830 join us for cocktails, dinner, and entertainment at Pousada Sao Sebastiao, a restored fort overlooking the harbor. Dress-resort casual.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26

Set sail for either Pico or Sao Jorge arriving late afternoon. The fleet will split again with those who had visited Sao Jorge on the outbound trip now visiting

one of the three Pico harbors while the others visit Velas.

Alternatively, cruisers may choose to remain in Angra for an additional day and arrive in Pico or Sao Jorge late on Thursday with a half-day in Sao Jorge or Pico. This plan provides a day to explore Cais do Castel on the west side of Monte Brasil and Sao Mateus, a small fishing harbor, a little farther west.

THURSDAY, JULY 27

Spend the day in Pico or Sao Jorge.

FRIDAY, JULY 28

Return to Horta and check-in with SailAzores. Explore Horta and Faial.

Gather at 1900 for the closing dinner at Pousada da Horta, a restored fort overlooking the harbor. Dress-jacket and tie.

SATURDAY, JULY 29

Departures or extend your visit to the Azores



ISLAND HIGHLIGHTS

From the Sailazores web site:

FAIAL

Caldeira and Capelinhos Volcanos.

PICO

Landscape of the Pico Island Vineyard Culture; Whalemens' Museum at Lajes do Pico and Whaling Industry Museum at São Roque do Pico; Capitão and Caiado Lagoons.

SAO JORGE

Town of Velas; Fajã dos Cubres, Fajã do Ouidor and Fajã de Santo Cristo.

TERCEIRA

UNESCO city of Angra do Heroismo; Algar do Carvão caves (closed on Tuesdays; otherwise, open in the afternoons).

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