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Ficha viaje



Unique Whale and Dolphin Tour in the Azores - 5 Nights

The Azores Archipelago is one of the premier whale and dolphin watching sites in the world, and the subject of films by the BBC and National Geographic.

This unique Package also relies on a network of land based lookouts, called "vigias", reminiscence from the whaling days, where highly specialized observers spot the whales using ancestral methods and guide the boats to the observation area.

Resumen del viaje

"Itinerary"

Every tour has a different itinerary, depending on the location of the animals, frequency and species of cetacean seen and ocean conditions. As a guide, on 5 and 9 night tours we would expect to have 3 and 6 full days of whale and dolphin watching respectively. We generally leave port at 9am and return around 4 pm, so you can relax at your hotel before dinner each evening. You will have a chance to explore one or two of the Azores' central group islands during your tour on shore days that are usually taken every third day. We give you an orientation talk for each island and we can organize island tours if you require them. Car, moped and cycle hire are all available and some islands have horse riding too. No shore activities are included in the cost of the tour. All visits to Pico or São Jorge involve taking a short ferry ride. Boat charters are also available.

"Tour Leaders"

The project leaders for these tours will be Lisa Steiner and Norberto Serpa. Lisa first came to the Azores as part of the IFAW research team on "Song of the Whale" where she was responsible for the cataloguing and matching of sperm whale fluke identification photographs, and for analyzing all other sightings. Since then, Lisa has published several scientific papers on Azorean cetaceans and presented her work to the Marine Mammal and European Cetacean Societies. Lisa has worked on other research projects involving bottlenose dolphin in Alabama and Miami, humpback whales in Hawaii, minke whales in Scotland, fin whales in the Cape Verde islands and a Northern Right whale search in Bermuda. Lisa is the on-board naturalist during all tours and will be able to answer your questions.

"Physeter"

For our trips to sea we use the amazing motor catamaran "Physeter", a specially modified 40ft (12m) fiberglass vessel built in Cornwall in 2001. Because she has two hulls she is highly maneuverable

and very stable and the latter makes it easy to move around her decks when at sea. Good stability means you are less prone to sea sickness, can be comfortable while watching the animals and photography is easier. Her top deck (the "flying bridge") offers great views of the whales without needing to go too

close. The foredeck is a brilliant place to watch the dolphins from and when sitting, your feet dangle just a few feet above them, swimming along right underneath you. There is seating for 12 inside the airy cabin if you want to get out of the sun or breeze. Although we will be cruising at very leisurely speeds for most of our days at sea, the quiet 325hp twin Caterpillar diesel engines and low wash hulls give us the speed to get to places very quickly when necessary. As well as being quiet above water, the power delivery and special hull designs mean she is acoustically very quiet underwater. Using our hydrophone we have discovered that when travelling at 2-5 knots (cruising speed when with whales and dolphins) her propellers are virtually silent, so we are disturbing the animals as little as possible. As the catamaran has two hulls this means the dolphins now have twice as much fun when bow riding! The vessel is equipped with a fridge for cold drinks, gas hob for tea and coffee breaks, and a toilet. "Physeter" is inspected annually by the authorities and complies with all Portuguese safety regulations for passenger carrying vessels.

"Research"

The sperm whale is the main subject of our research and individuals can be identified from the profile of the trailing edge of their tails (or flukes). This is their version of a fingerprint and everyone is different. Once a whale is located we follow it quietly and carefully and photograph its tail as it "flukes up" and dives. The photograph can then be compared with previously collected tail photos and this process is known as photo identification or photo ID. Using this method we have identified 1324 individual sperm whales in the Azores since 1993. Add the 510 individual whales identified

by the IFAW team between 1987 and 1991 and you have the second biggest sperm whale photo ID catalogue in the world. By analyzing this catalogue annually we have discovered dozens of individual whales that have been seen in the Azores in more than one year (the record is 9 different years for one animal!) and working with sperm whale researchers around the Atlantic, we have discovered five animals seen in the Azores that have also been spotted in the Canaries, Madeira and Norway respectively.

Individuals spend around 45 -50 minutes deep underwater actually eating, and then around 8-12 minutes on the surface, recovering from their last dive and preparing for the next one. Groups do not dive simultaneously so there are often whales surfacing every 10 or 15 minutes. When they are on the surface they swim along slowly sometimes suckling the young calves, which do not dive deeply. A wide variety of other behaviors can sometimes be observed, including breaching, lob tailing, spy hopping, and socializing. Research on the whales and dolphins will be continuing while you are on board as a guest. This will include: recording surface times, noting behaviors, group size, and presence of calves, group heading, and the position of the whales. As well as the sperm whale photo ID work, we also do photo ID on the bottlenose dolphin and Risso's dolphin populations of the Azores. The Azores bottlenose dolphin photo ID catalogue has now grown to over 800 animals. Our research also involves the occasional catching and tagging of loggerhead turtles for turtle researchers During the tagging procedure which takes place on the aft deck and lasts for about 8 minutes, you will have chance to see the loggerhead turtles up close and it's very easy to get a good photograph of these interesting creatures. In addition

to cetaceans, turtles and birds we regularly have sightings of other marine life such as sharks and sport fish such as marlin and swordfish.

If you will just be in Horta for a few days, give us a call or send us an email. We offer day trips from 9am until around 4pm. Price - 100 euros per person or 180 euros for 2.

Itinerario ampliado

The Azores

Comprising nine distinctive islands, the Azorean archipelago has been Portuguese territory since the first inhabitants lived there in the 15th century. Legend says the islands are the tips of the lost continent of Atlantis. The Azores lie around 950 miles west of Lisbon, and are a haven of tranquility and calm. Mass tourism has all but passed by these enchanting islands, with their quiet country lanes, friendly local people and impressive views. They are lucky to have a very mild maritime Mediterranean climate so the countryside is always wonderfully green and lush. July and August are the warmest months but whenever you visit it never gets uncomfortably hot or cold.

“Faial”

Our tours are based at the modern marina in Horta on the island of Faial, often called the “Blue Island” because of the abundance of hydrangeas growing there. Evidence of its popularity as a stop-off point for transatlantic yachtsman can be seen from the extensive harbor wall paintings, left by each boat as a sign of good luck. On one of your shore days you could head up to the Caldeira. This extinct volcano crater 1043 m, above sea level offers remarkable views of the other three islands of the central group. An eerie place to visit is the village of Capelinhos at the Western end of the island. During 1957/8 a volcano spewed over 100 ft of ash onto the village, and created an extra 3/4 of a kilometer of land on the end of the island. Over the years however the wind has eroded the ash away and now some of the houses of the village have started reappearing out of the ground, most with their walls still intact. An excellent museum is situated close to the site, excavated under the old light house.

During your tour you will also have a chance to visit Pico.

“Pico”

The obvious attraction of this island is the impressive volcanic Pico Mountain 2351 m. This mountain is the highest point anywhere in Portugal and dominates the island and all others around it. A stately green pyramid of truly majestic proportions, it is one of the most beautiful in the world. A tour of Pico is not complete without a visit to the village of Lajes do Pico. This village was the centre of whaling culture in the Azores and one of the last places to cease whaling. The two whaling museums are well worth a visit as is the old whaling factory at São Roque, which has also been converted into a museum. During a drive round the island you will see the small volcanic rock enclosures built by farmers to provide protection for the growing grape vines. An area of these enclosures on the South coast has recently been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. You may also see the ‘Mistérios’ or ‘Mysteries’; dark lava landscapes created by eruptions and sometimes covered in dense woods.

Incluido

No Incluido

Hoteles

Accommodation and Food

The accommodation for our tours in Horta city is located in a back street close to the centre of town. There are 14 rooms (on 4 floors) in this pension style hotel; the rooms are simple and comfortable and have en-suite bathrooms. Several rooms have balconies and views or partial views of Pico and the sea. The second option has only 7 rooms and a small garden which you can use. We are located at about a 15 minutes

walk from the boat. Please note that although all rooms are decorated to the same standard, some rooms are smaller or do not have a view, so early booking is advised.

ALL ROOMS 4 STAR ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement is 175euros / 295euros (9 night tours low/high season)

95eurs / 175 euros (5 night tours low/high season)