

## Azores Rare Whale Watching Tour

**Destination:** Pico & Sao Miguel, Azores

**Season:** July-August



Private charter boat for all whale and dolphin watching cruises throughout the trip



Very possible to see 10 and many more different species of marine mammals!



Arrive at the ideal time for **Northern Bottlenose Whales** around the Azores



Expert marine mammal guides for all 12 whale and dolphin watching boat trips!



Chances for the rare **Pygmy Sperm Whales** and near guaranteed **Sperm Whales**

### Dates:

Next group tour: 24<sup>th</sup> July – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2027

### Private / Tailored Tour information:

This is a special once a year whale and dolphin watching tour, which is timed for the last week in July. This is the one week of the year that historically has had the best chances of seeing the incredibly rare and stunning looking Northern Bottlenose Whale. This is not a guarantee of course, the whales arrive here for a short period of time from cooler waters but they tend to appear around here during this period.

We could look to arrange the trip for another time of year, however the chances of this species would be lesser. However at all months of year there are some species around the Azores. The sperm whales and several species of dolphins are resident all year around, and some other species migrate through at different times of year, such as blue whales and sei whales.

We just choose the best time of year to maximise diversity of marine life here and it is not uncommon to see 10 or more species of whale and dolphin, which is pretty much the only place in the world where that is possible with nearshore whale watching boat trips for a week.

If you wish to book a private tour and tailor this itinerary we can also look into that option. The factor to consider here is that this tour is with a private chartered boat, skipper and guide, for private tours of less than 10-11 people the price can be very expensive per person.

### Prices (2027 season):

Group Tour (8 nights)

£2,695 per person

\*single supplement (not always available – please enquire)

**Group size 11 people**

### Overview

**Day 1:** Pico Airport / Lajes do Pico

**Days 2-6:** Lajes do Pico

**Day 7:** Lajes do Pico / Pico Airport / Ponta Delgada / Vila Franca

**Day 8:** Vila Franca

**Day 9:** Vila Franca / Ponta Delgada / Home





# Tour Information

## Introduction

Erupting out of the mid Atlantic the Azores are a volcanic archipelago far away from anything; but the isolation is one of the reasons the waters are so productive. The cold water upwellings from the deep Atlantic bring nutrients to the surface waters, these in turn bring the phyto- and zooplankton which is the basis for the food chain here. The fish and squid that aggregate here are the major foods for the many marine mammals which call the Azores home or visit here at certain time of year.

These conditions have led to an exceptional variety of whales and dolphins occurring here, in fact no fewer than 26 species of cetacean have been recorded, and it is common to see six to eight different species every boat trip you take here.

This is a dedicated whale and dolphin watching tour and unlike many of the whale watching trips which visit the Azores we time our trip to coincide with the appearance of very rare species which only visit the region for a short time each year. By taking two boat trips per day (a total of 12 boat trips) in specialist boats captained by experienced skipper and guided by an expert marine mammal guide and accompanied by a Royle Safaris tour leader. Making sure there will be many sets of experienced eyes looking for the tell tale signs of marine mammals.

So the reason for timing the trip in the last week of July is that this is the time of year that historically the **northern bottlenose whales** arrive here as they pass through the mid Atlantic. These huge and very rarely seen whales are joined during this time of year by another beaked whale, the much smaller **Sowerby's beaked whale**. There are also increased chances to see other rarities at this time compared to other times of year (such as **pygmy sperm whale** and **false killer whales**. Along with these very seasonal species there are many other species which are wither resident here and near guaranteed or spend large parts of the year in the Azores. Commonly seen species including the massive and impressive **sperm whale**, **short-finned pilot whales**, **Atlantic spotted**, **common bottlenose**, **Risso's** and **common dolphin**.

This trip will be mainly based on the island of Pico and most of our whale watching trips (10) will be done from here, but we will also visit Sao Miguel and have a couple of whale watching trips here too, where there is a slightly better chance of seeing **Sei whales** at this time of year.

The huge advantage of booking on this trip is that for our time in Pico we will have a chartered boat and that enables us to focus more on the rarer species, whilst other boat trips will always focus on seeing sperm whales, we do not have to do this once we have all had great views. We can then go further and for longer looking for the rarer species. This flexibility is the key to these trips being so rewarding.

Being on board with the very knowledgeable local guides you will be learning about the cetaceans as we look for them and observe them.

All in all we are happy to announce this new itinerary, which is the very first dedicated whale watching group tour that Royle Safaris offers and with many of the target species being very rare it is the perfect addition to our mammalwatching trip portfolio.

Please read the below itinerary and feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like to book on the trip.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 Pico / Lajes do Pico

### Arrival & Travelling

#### Accommodation:

Whale'come Ao Pico (Local Guest House)

#### Food:

Dinner will be included today and served at the accommodation (breakfast and lunch are not included)

#### Transportation:

Shuttle Bus.

Today you will need to arrive into Pico Airport (PIX) on Pico Island in the Azores. On arrival you will be collected by a shuttle bus and taken across the island in a south-east direction to the small harbour village of Lajes do Pico. You will then be checked in and have time to settle into the accommodation.

Once the whole group has arrived today you will have dinner with your tour leader and be briefed on the trip and what to expect tomorrow for the first boat trip and of course over the course of the trip.

### Days 2-6 Lajes do Pico

### Whale Watching

#### Accommodation:

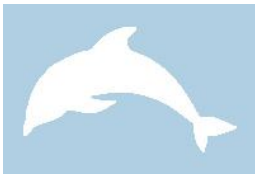
Whale'come Ao Pico (Local Guest House)

#### Food:

All of your meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are including on these days and will be served at the accommodation in between whale watching trips.

#### Transportation:

Chartered Whale Watching Boat & Walking.



Each of the next 5 days will run the same; with the exception of the morning of day 2 where you will have the in depth briefing about the boats and the trips. This only has to be done once.

Each morning you will have breakfast at around 8am and then (on day 1) head over to the whale watching operators office for a briefing. This will include the safety procedures for the boat trips as well as an introduction to the Azores, Pico and of course the whales and dolphins which live here.

After the briefing (and from day 1 onwards) you will just have to meet at the office a few minutes before the boat trip is due to start. These are scheduled for 9am and 2pm each day. They are roughly 3 hours long each trip (so around 6 hours on the water each day).

The boats we use are guided by excellent spotters on land in towers who have the ability and skills to see the smallest sign of whales and dolphins over 5km out at sea. These spotters are in radio communication with the skippers and are the principle eyes when it comes to our search for cetaceans. The skipper, marine mammal guide and our tour leader are also expert spotters and coupled with hydrophones (which can listen for whale and dolphins calls under the water) help us pinpoint the animals. The crew here in Pico have been doing whale watching here for over 30 years are some of the most experienced and well trained in the world, which is fitting as Pico Island in the Azores is a Top 10 Whale Watching destination globally. But unlike many of the other Top 10 Whale Watching destinations around the world tourism here is still pretty small scale and so you are not sharing sightings with dozens of other boats, plus all of these boats here are small (20 pax maximum), so you do not have huge boats around the animals.

We never know what animals we will encounter each time we go out, but we are nearly guaranteed to see some marine mammals the waters here are so productive. Over the years the statistics for which cetaceans are seen and how regularly they are seen at different times of year allows us to give a rough indication of what we could see. In July we have very good chances for: **sperm whale, Atlantic spotted dolphins, common bottlenose dolphins, common dolphins, Risso's dolphins, short-finned pilot whale and northern bottlenose whale**; Above average chances for: **striped dolphin and Sowerby's beaked whale**; Pretty decent chances for: **false killer whales and Sei whale** and of course there are always chances for real rarities such as **Bryde's whale, orca, rough-toothed dolphin, long-finned pilot whale, pygmy sperm whale, dwarf sperm whale and Cuvier's beaked whale** which are all species which have been recorded here during July in past years.

Whilst here it is also worth keeping an eye out for the only endemic mammal to the Azores, the **Azorean noctule**, this large species of insectivorous bat is often seen flying in the daytime (not just in the late evening when it is still light) but sometimes in the middle of the day. Their large size and distinctive shape (coupled with the unusual behaviour of flying in the day time) make this one of the few insectivorous bats which can be identified in flight. However we will also ask around for any roosts and see if we can see some closer in a roost (if there are any roosts around when we are there).

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## Day 7 Lajes do Pico / Ponta Delgada

### Travelling

#### Accommodation:

Pestana Bahia  
Praia or similar (4\*  
Hotel)

#### Food:

Breakfast will be served at the Pico accommodation  
with lunch and dinner are not included today.

#### Transportation:

Shuttle buses &  
Domestic flight.

This morning will be the last morning in Pico Island and we will have breakfast and pack up, once we have checked out we will take the shuttle back to the airport and catch the flight across the Sao Miguel Island (the main island in the archipelago).

Once we arrive in Ponta Delgada we will be transferred to the hotel, after checking in you are free to explore the town, there are no plans for the rest of the day.

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## Day 8 Ponta Delgada

### Whale Watching

#### Accommodation:

Pestana Bahia  
Praia or similar (4\*  
Hotel)

#### Food:

Breakfast will be served at the hotel with no other  
meals included today.

#### Transportation:

Whale Watching  
Boat.

Today will be our last day whale watching and we will once again have two whale watching trips, these will be shared with other people on the boat, and run by a different operator. However the format of the trip will be the same as on previous days. We will have a marine biologist along with us on the boat and the boat will be guided to the animals by on shore look outs again.

Many of the same species of marine mammal will be seen around here as in Pico, but there is a slightly higher chance of seeing baleen whales here in July than Pico (although the main season for baleen whales has already passed). We will hope to see different species and maybe a **sei whale** or **Bryde's whale** whilst here.





As well as the marine mammals there are chances for other species of marine life here including leatherback turtles, loggerhead turtles, whale sharks, sunfish and of course a host of sea birds which we will see over the ocean and also using the shore as roost sites.

We will return to the harbour in between the boat trips and whilst we will probably not have enough to go back to the hotel, we can have lunch around the harbour (not included) before having the second boat trip.

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## Day 9      **Home**

## *Departure*

### Accommodation:

NA

### Food:

Breakfast will be served at the hotel, with no other meals included today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

Today we will leave the hotel and be transferred back to Ponta Delgada airport to catch our return flights home.

### **Your tour and all Royle Safaris services end upon transfer to the airport**

Please note that the itinerary stated above is correct as our planned intentions for the tour. However adverse weather conditions and other local considerations can necessitate some modifications of the itinerary during the course of the tour; any changes will be made to make the best of the time, weather conditions and other constraints forced upon us and all changes will be made in conjunction with our terms and conditions.

### **Important Information About the Whale & Dolphin Watching Boat Trips**

Please note that all individuals with the following conditions are not permitted to participate in our sea activities: People with back problems, individual who have had surgery within the last 6 months. Pregnant women. Children under 5 years old.





### **Tour Inclusions**

Absolutely everything mentioned in the above itinerary is included (except where it is expressly mentioned as an optional extra).

- All accommodation as mentioned above or of a similar standard as mentioned.
- All meals as mentioned above, these will be breakfast, lunch and dinner (***some meals are not including – such as in Sao Miguel***).
- Airport shuttles / taxis for transfers.
- English speaking tour leader throughout.
- All fuel, tolls, taxes and other expenses relating to driving.
- Local expert marine mammal guide / biologist for all boat trips as well as experienced skippers.
- All whale / dolphin watching boat trips as mentioned (10 in Pico and 2 in Sao Miguel).
- Private chartered whale watching boat for the 10 trips in Pico.
- A selection of field guides of the local areas will be available on request.
- Domestic flights (Pico – Ponta Delgada) in economy class.

### **Tour Exclusions**

Nearly everything you will need is included in the price you have already paid for the tour. However there are some things not included.

- International flights to and from the tour start and end points.
- Travel insurance including any fees that result from emergency medical or evacuation needs.
- Visa fees for entering the country(s).
- Vaccinations and any medication (such as anti-malarial tablets) are not included.
- Any food other than the meals provided and mentioned in the above itinerary (***some meals are not included – such as in Sao Miguel***).
- Drinks
- Any items of a personal nature are not included, such as souvenirs, medication, toiletries, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips are also not included.
- Any departure taxes which may be due when leaving are not included (but may be included in the cost of your flights).

**Please refer to our Terms & Conditions (<http://www.royle-safaris.co.uk/terms-conditions/>) before booking any trips – email or paper copies of Terms & Conditions can be provided if needed**