

Twin Crater Lakes by Day, a Thermal Soak at Midnight — A 6-Day Azores Itinerary

Six days on São Miguel, the largest island in the Azores — a green volcanic crater lake seen from a ruined hotel terrace, a natural hot-spring waterfall in the forest, a village built around a pot of stew that cooks underground in volcanic steam, and a whale-watching boat out of Ponta Delgada — with real hotels, real tour operators, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION

6 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

May – June & September
mild temperatures, thinner crowds than peak summer, and a better shot at clear skies over the crater lakes; July–August is warmest and busiest, winter brings frequent rain and cloud cover

FROM

\$780 USD / person
for 2 people, incl. rental car, 5 nights' lodging, park/garden entrance fees, and a whale-watching tour

Day 1

Ponta Delgada

A first afternoon in the Azorean capital, arriving into a walkable black-and-white basalt old town on the south coast of São Miguel.

Rental Car Pickup — João Paulo II Airport (PDL)

~5 minutes to the city center · from \$20 USD / day

São Miguel is built for a rental car — there's no island-wide rail or reliable bus network to the crater lakes and coastal viewpoints this itinerary covers, and the airport sits practically inside Ponta Delgada.

Autatlantis Rent-a-Car · autatlantis.com

Portas da Cidade & Ponta Delgada Old Town

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

Three 18th-century basalt arches that once marked the harbor entrance to the city, now standing at the top of a plaza a few blocks from the water — the traditional starting point for a walk through the cobbled streets of the old town.

Dinner — A Tasca

~1.5 hours · \$25–\$35 USD / person

A small, always-busy tapas spot on Rua do Aljube in the old town, built around local Azorean seafood and cheese plates — arrive early or expect a wait at the bar.

A Tasca · Rua do Aljube 16-18, Ponta Delgada

Overnight — Hotel Marina Atlântico

From \$95–\$130 USD / night, for 2 people

A harborfront hotel a short walk from the old town, with rooms looking out over the marina where the whale-watching boats leave from later in the trip.

Hotel Marina Atlântico · bensaudehotels.com

Day 2

Sete Cidades & the Ferrara Pool

The island's single most photographed view, a village built inside a volcanic crater, and a natural hot pool where the Atlantic meets a lava vent.

Vista do Rei & Lagoa das Sete Cidades

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

A viewpoint at the rim of a massive volcanic caldera, looking down on twin crater lakes — one tinted green, one blue — divided by a narrow causeway; the terrace of the abandoned Monte Palace Hotel behind the viewpoint makes for an eerie extra stop.

Sete Cidades Village

~1 hour, self-guided · free

A small farming village inside the crater itself, its neo-Gothic church reflected in the lake — a good lunch stop before the drive around to the coast.

Ponta da Ferrara Natural Pool

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free (small parking fee)

A natural seawater pool at the island's westernmost point, heated by an underground volcanic vent where hot spring water mixes with the cold Atlantic — best visited near low tide, when the pool fills and calms.

Overnight — Hotel Marina Atlântico

From \$95–\$130 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night back at the harborfront hotel in Ponta Delgada.

Day 3

Lagoa do Fogo & the Drive to Furnas

A crater lake in the island's protected interior, a forest waterfall you can bathe in, and a drive to the geothermal village that gives the Azores their most famous dish.

Lagoa do Fogo Viewpoint

~45 minutes, self-guided · free

The highest and least developed of São Miguel's crater lakes, sitting inside a nature reserve at over 1,600 feet — often wrapped in cloud, so a clear view here is worth pausing for.

Caldeira Velha Waterfall & Thermal Pool

~1.5 hours, self-guided · ~\$8 USD / person

A warm waterfall in a fern-covered forest gorge, fed by a volcanic hot spring, with a shallow pool at its base for soaking — the water runs a comfortable bath temperature year-round.

Dinner — Cozido das Furnas, Restaurante Tony's

~1.5 hours · \$25–\$35 USD / person

The Azores' signature dish — a stew of meats and vegetables slow-cooked for hours in pots buried in the geothermally heated ground of the village's fumarole fields — served at a Furnas institution that's been making it for decades.

Restaurante Tony's · [tripadvisor.com/Restaurante_Tonys](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurante_Tonys)

Overnight — Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, Furnas

From \$170–\$220 USD / night, for 2 people

A hotel built inside a 12-hectare botanical garden, with round-the-clock access to its iron-rich, rust-colored thermal pool — a soak under the stars is included in the room.

Terra Nostra Garden Hotel · [bensaudehotels.com](https://www.bensaudehotels.com)

Day 4

Furnas & the Nordeste Coast

A morning in the botanical garden and fumarole fields of Furnas, then a scenic drive along the island's wildest, greenest coastline.

Terra Nostra Botanical Garden

~2 hours, self-guided · ~\$9 USD / person

A 19th-century botanical garden with more than 700 plant species, camellia groves, and fern-lined paths surrounding the hotel's thermal pool — hotel guests get pool access included, but the wider garden is worth the extra time.

Lagoa das Furnas & the Fumarole Fields

~1 hour, self-guided · free

A lake ringed by hissing volcanic vents and bubbling mud pools, where the cozido pots seen at dinner the night before are actually lowered into the ground to cook.

Scenic Drive to Nordeste & Ponta do Sossego

~2 hours round trip · self-guided

A winding coastal road out to the island's northeastern tip, ending at a cliffside garden viewpoint over some of São Miguel's steepest, greenest sea cliffs.

Overnight — Terra Nostra Garden Hotel

From \$170–\$220 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night in Furnas, with another after-dark soak in the thermal pool before heading back to the coast.

Day 5

Whale Watching & Ponta Delgada

A drive back to the capital for a boat out onto the Atlantic, where sperm whales and several dolphin species are spotted on a majority of trips.

Drive — Furnas to Ponta Delgada

~45 minutes via the EN1-1A · self-guided

A straightforward run back across the island to the marina in time for the whale-watching boat.

Whale & Dolphin Watching Tour — Futurismo

~3 hours · from ~\$70 USD / person

A boat trip out from Ponta Delgada marina using land-based spotters to track sperm whales, and depending on the season, blue whales, fin whales, and several dolphin species — the Azores sit on a deep-water migration corridor that makes year-round sightings possible.

Futurismo Azores Adventures · futurismo.pt

Dinner in Ponta Delgada

~1.5 hours · \$25–\$35 USD / person

A last relaxed evening back in the old town, with the harbor and marina lit up after the day's boat trip.

Overnight — Hotel Marina Atlântico

From \$95–\$130 USD / night, for 2 people

A third and final night back at the harborfront hotel.

Day 6

Vila Franca Islet & Departure

A last morning on the water at a volcanic islet just offshore, then the drive back to the airport to close out the trip.

Vila Franca do Campo Islet Boat Tour

~2 hours · from ~\$39 USD / person

A boat trip around the flooded crater of an offshore islet, a protected nature reserve and one of the best snorkeling spots on São Miguel, with a calm natural pool inside the ring of rock.

Departure — Rental Car Return, João Paulo II Airport

~20 minutes from Vila Franca do Campo · self-guided

A short drive back along the coast to Ponta Delgada, closing the loop on six days that ran from a crater-lake viewpoint to a whale-watching boat on the open Atlantic.