



*Pico Island in the Portuguese Azores is an enchanting island surrounded by natural beauty. The best way to hop from island to island is by private yacht.*



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# LOST IN PARADISE

The Portuguese Azores remains mostly unexplored. Hop from one island to another on a luxurious private yacht

**There is a special mist** that rolls into the valleys of São Miguel Island. With thousands of years of volcanic activity, the island is just one of the nine arresting islands of the Portuguese Azores. And so, paradise isn't gilded with fancy hotels, or over the top spas and is never strewn with people. Paradise is actually totally remote, yet to be discovered; and it's calling.

In the middle of the Atlantic Ocean – sort of midway between Europe and North America – is where the Azores has been hiding from the world. With far fewer tourists than mainland Portugal and its popular island Madeira, this is a little slice of Europe tucked away just for your discovery – with the same culture, incredible food, friendly people, but all on a smaller scale.

The Azores has mystical green lush lands with colossal volcanic craters now re-imagined as lakes, all with a subtropical climate. ➔



**ABOVE**  
*Lagoa das Sete Cidades is a twin lake situated in the crater of a dormant volcano on the Portuguese archipelago of the Azores. The Azores will never be a mass tourism destination because the locals don't want that for their islands.*

This is a paradise like no other – the hot springs ease steam, blue hydrangeas bloom all year and there are more cows than humans. Henry the Navigator was the first European to stake his claim on the islands around 1439 – and Portugal has held on to it for most of its modern existence. And it's evident why.

In recent years the islands have become more developed, with the capital Ponta Delgada receiving the most love. Last year, a few grand design hotels opened – such as Azor Hotel right downtown and Furnas Boutique Hotel and Spa in the thermal activity area. But as Luis Nunes, an Azorean entrepreneur who started Azores Getaways, will tell you – the best way to explore these islands is from an elegant yacht.

“The finest way to explore these beautiful islands is to book a

Dufour yacht – disconnect from the everyday world and hop from island to island,” Nunes says. He recommends doing four enchanting islands in one swoop – Terceira, São Jorge, Pico and Faial – all surrounded by natural beauty and one sporting the only coffee plantation in all of Europe. “The islands are perfect for the traveller keen on something a little different, off the usual track of travel – and, of course, the coffee aficionados will now have their own little hush-hush place to discover,” Nunes says. “I believe the Azores will never be a mass tourism destination, because the locals don't want

THE ISLANDS ARE PERFECT FOR THE TRAVELLER  
KEEN ON SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT

that for our islands." Once on the yacht, the beauty is yours to coddle. As you hop from island to island, swim in the crystal clear waters, a smiling dolphin or whale will pass by you. Pico Island is where the Pico Volcano stands tall, and the landscape of the Pico Island vineyard culture is Unesco protected.

Criação Velha, a small unknown wine region, is an ideal way to spend your day. "On Faial Island, you can admire the Faial Capelinhos volcano but also swim in natural lava pools or hike at Caldeira, the

biggest volcano crate on the island," Nunes says. On Terceira on the other hand, there is a fortress and castle to uncover, he adds.

Sipping local wine on the yacht, eating freshly caught seafood – all while looking at volcanos as the sperm whales, dolphins and turtles swim up to the yacht – things don't get much better than that.

The archipelago, making up these nine islands, is known for two things: hot springs (similar to what Iceland has except that these are truly natural) ➔



**LEFT**  
*Majestic view of Pico Volcano on Pico Island from a plane*

**BELOW**  
*Sunrise at the Portuguese Azores is simply breathtaking.*





**TOP**  
*The Azores largely remains unexplored. Locals enjoy their quiet and serene life.*

**ABOVE**  
*Visitors can watch the beautiful sunrise on Pico Island.*

and endless adventure activities – think horses, deep sea diving, kayaking, mountain biking, windsurfing, paragliding and mountain climbing.

The islands are equally perfect for meditation in the forest, yoga on some scraggly cliffs or doing your tai chi on a deserted beach. Of course, the coffee element is equally amazing. On São Jorge island there is a tiny crop of beans, making it some of the most exclusive coffee to get your hands on.

“Unfortunately, there are no bibliographical references that accurately state the introduction of the coffee plantation in São Jorge,” says Dina Nunes, whose father is the farmer and owner of Cafe Nunes and the small plantation on the island. But what really strikes you as interesting – when you stop by on your yacht – isn’t just the discovery of coffee in Europe, but the tiny volume that Manuel Nunes – Dina’s father, who is in his 60s – tends to.

The family bought the land almost 40 years ago – with only a small handful of plants. Today they have 800 coffee plants and in the last year reached a final production of only 350 kilograms of beans – if you’re lucky you might be able to buy a little bag of this gold.

And that is exactly what makes the Azores so exceptional – preserved in terms of nature, hidden from the regular traveller.

“Even if you live here, there are always a lot of secrets spots with their own magic,” says Matteo Carosi Cordeiro, who owns Tripix Azores and is a guide on the island. “Every island is very, very different. All them have very small populations, but are proud of their strong culture. Everyone will treat you not like a tourist, but like a friend.”

Perhaps the most luxurious, and exceptional, part of the Azores experience is the idea of a secret



**LEFT**  
*Colourful and charming houses on Terceira Island, one of the islands in the Azores archipelago*

**BELOW**  
*Pico Island loves its red colour and it is evident in everything.*



## COFFEE AFICIONADOS WILL NOW HAVE THEIR OWN LITTLE HUSH-HUSH PLACE TO DISCOVER

place that hasn't been discovered by the masses. It is, after all, private in the true sense of the word.

For Carosi Cordeiro part of the "under wraps" element here is the nature being mixed with a sense of good energy.

"The Azores isn't for everyone. It is for real travellers [who] are not worried about posting on social media as many places as they can. Because the most important [thing] for them is to sit down on a rock by the coast and feel the sprinkles of salty water, or to be in a local bar and have a humble and rich chat with a gentle Azorean," he says.

The Azoreans themselves tend to inspire in their visitors a strong sense of the beauty of pristine nature. "When you are here you realise what really matters in life, and even if you are just visiting you enter into the rhythm of the island, appreciating each flower, the sound of the waves, the birds, and

feeling the wind," Carosi Cordeiro says. "So it is just a matter of living in the present moment and realising how powerful is nature and how connected we are with it."

The Azores has wellness ingrained. Fresh air, greenery all around and a quiet pace of life that makes for stress free living – all conducive to helping you make a direct connection with your inner self.

Of course it's four hours from America and two hours flight from Europe, so not completely isolated.

"Here you realise you don't need much to be happy, so you stop consuming all the useless things that we do in the big cities. As well most of the people grow their own vegetables, also do some fishing by the coast... so in terms of nutrition Azores is a perfect place to come feast on natural food," Carosi Cordeiro says. If we can now only take this luxurious knowledge and carry it with us in our everyday life.

Make sure to visit [azoresgetaways.com](http://azoresgetaways.com) who will facilitate a trip out to the Azores on your own private yacht. ➔

## AMAZING GETAWAY

### PLACES TO STAY:

Azor Hotel ([www.azorhotel.com](http://www.azorhotel.com)) is right downtown and has a stunning sea view. Furnas Boutique Hotel and Spa ([www.furnasboutiquehotel.com](http://www.furnasboutiquehotel.com)) is in the thermal activity area.

### FOR ISLAND-HOPPING BLISS:

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