

# AZORES

Sao Miguel island – Pico island

25 July – 01 August 2024



*Short-beaked common dolphin – Pico island*

## Introduction

7 days in the fantastic Azores archipelago with a mix of relaxing time and an attempt to see some lifer cetaceans.

I shared my time between Sao Miguel island (3 nights) and Pico island (4 nights). Azores airlines have good connections in between. I also did a day tour to the charming Faial island which is only a 30 minutes boat ride from Pico.



*Sao Miguel island*

I did 3 whale watching tours altogether. One from Ponta Delgada at Sao Miguel and two from Madalena at Pico. These are the two main towns on the respective island.

The rest of the time I had a look around at these beautiful islands and just relaxed by the pool.

The operators I used for this was Futurismo in Ponta Delgada: <https://www.futurismo.pt/tours/whale-watching-in-ponta-delgada-sao-miguel-azores/> which use a catamaran or bigger boat rather than the standard zodiacs which is commonly used when whale watching in the Azores.

I personally like bigger boats with more space to see and photograph from so I opted for the bigger boat when I booked the tour. You can go by zodiac if you want.

In Madalena on Pico island I went out with CW Azores: <https://www.cwazores.com/> in their Zodiacs.

Both companys VERY good, reliable and with excellent knowledge.

Many people do the whale watching on Pico from Lajes Do Pico further south on the island but I choosed to do it from the main town Madalena because they have the best hotel on the island. Hotel Caravelas <https://www.oceanohoteis.com/> with a nice pool and just outside the hotel is the CW Azores office and the whale watching zodiacs. Just 5 minutes between the pool and the boats, perfect! 😊

There is also one more benefit to start from here as you can go in different directions depending on the wind. You almost always find less waves somewhere. One morning we went north towards Faial island and one morning south towards Lajes Do Pico.

At Ponta Delgada I stayed at <https://hotelpdl.com/en>



**Left:** *I split my time between the pool at Hotel Caravelas and the Zodiacs for whale watching.*

**Right:** *Whale watching from Ponta Delgada*



*Whale watching – Pico island*

The weather was hot and sunny most of the time. The sea was a little bit choppy from time to time but no problem.

In the end I saw **5 species** of mammals of which **4 were lifers** and this is the story about them

### My species list

**1. Sperm whale** --- By far the most common bigger whale in the Azores waters during the summer months. They stay here all year round. I saw them on all 3 tours I did. From both Ponta Delgada and Madalena. I think we saw 7 or 8 on one tour when we went north from Madalena towards Faial island. Then a single individual on the other two tours.



2. **Common bottlenose dolphin --- (Lifer)** Seen only on one tour from Ponta Delgada. Fairly common seen and they put on a show for us. Can be seen year round.



**3. Short beaked common dolphin --- (Lifer)** Very common in the Azores. By far the most commonly seen species and seen on all 3 tour I did. One super pod of around 100 individuals were seen from Madalena when we headed north towards Faial island. Can be seen year round.



**4. Atlantic spotted dolphin --- (Lifer)** A species I really hoped to see and on the last tour from Madalena when we went south towards Lajes Do Pico we encountered many of them. They are in the Azores only during the summer months.



5. **Short-finned pilot whale --- (Lifer)** Another species I hoped to see here. Frequently seen between April-October. Seen on the last tour from Madalena when we went south towards Lajes Do Pico.





## Stuff I missed

Well, A LOT! 😊

28<sup>th</sup> species have been seen in the Azores waters and I ticked 5 of them...

I saw the most common ones. I had some hope for Sei Whale as it was a good year with sightings through the summer. But unfortunately not. Otherwise is spring the time for the big baleen whales. So I need to come back in the spring for Blue whale and the other giants who pass these waters every year.

Striped dolphin was also on my short list but no luck with them.

Risso's dolphin is also common during summer. We didn't bump into them but I have seen them before so not on my list.

All in all 4 new lifers for me with top four sightings of **Short-beaked dolphin, Common bottlenose dolphin, Short-finned pilot whale and Atlantic spotted dolphin.**

## Random photos from my time in the Azores



Red rock crab (Grapsus adscensionis) – Pico island



*Cory's shearwater – Pico island. A good bird for birders...*



*Sao Miguel island*



*It is no coincidence that the Azores are called “the green islands”*



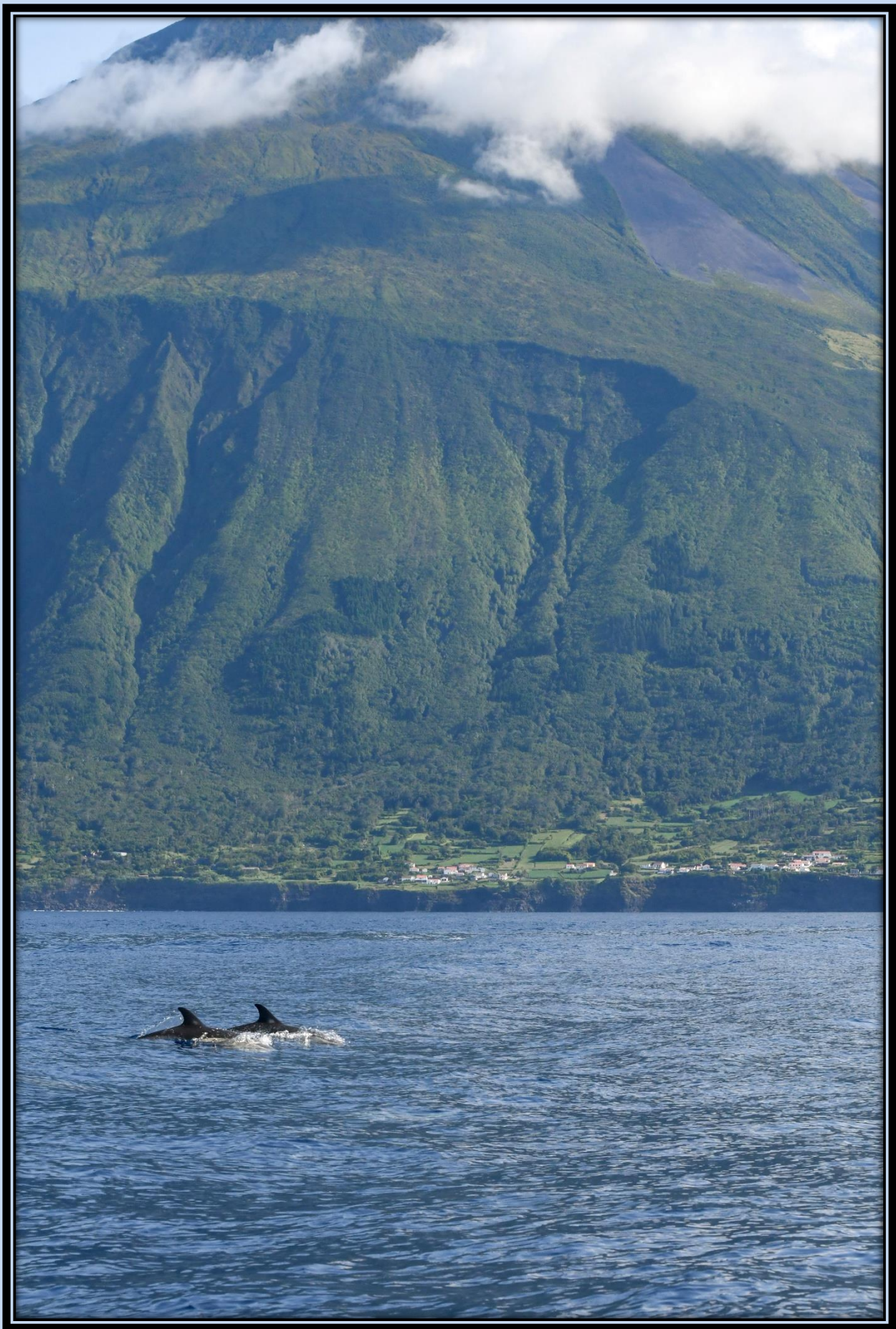
*Sete cidades – Sao Miguel island*

*I can recommend to do a tour around the island of Sao Miguel for the scenery because it's truly beautiful.*



**Left:** Madalena – Pico island. Harbour with our Zodiacs

**Right:** Our fellow whale watcher who was with us every day. He loves whales more than anyone else...



*Short beaked common dolphin – Pico island*

## **Big thank you from me to...**

- Azores airlines for putting me into a business seat between London – Ponta Delgada
- To both Futurismo and CW Azores for easy booking and good performance with knowledge guides.

### **Species list**

Sperm whale  
Common bottlenose dolphin  
Short-beaked common dolphin  
Atlantic spotted dolphin  
Short-finned pilot whale

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