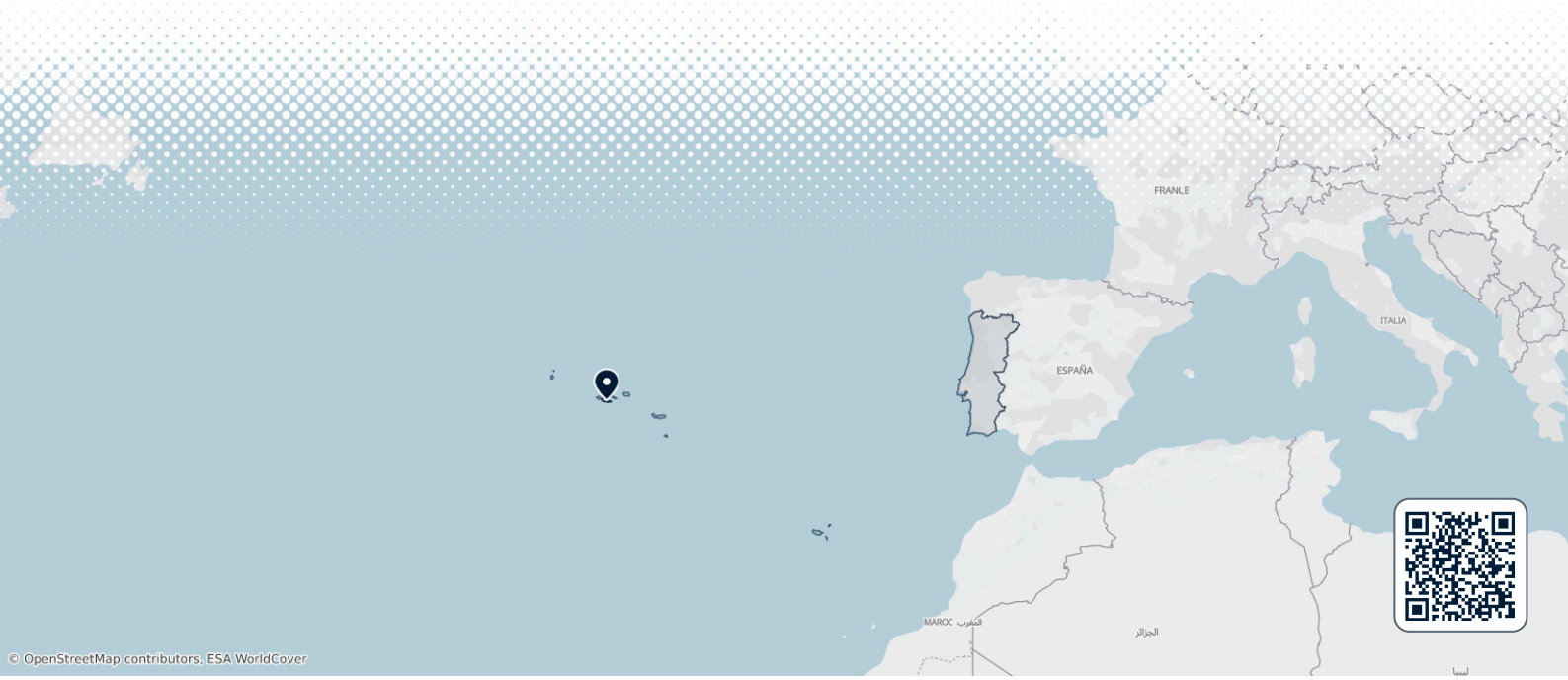


Pico Island

Azores · Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Pico is the second-largest island in the Azores. Its main feature is Mount Pico, a dormant volcano. At 2,351 m, it is the highest mountain in Portugal.

The island suits slow, outdoor trips. Visitors hike to the summit, walk between lava-stone vineyards, go into a lava cave and look for whales offshore. Villages are small and spread along the coast. The vineyards are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

When to visit

Summer is the driest and warmest season and the best time for hiking and swimming. Winter is wet and windy. The highlands get much more rain than the coast.

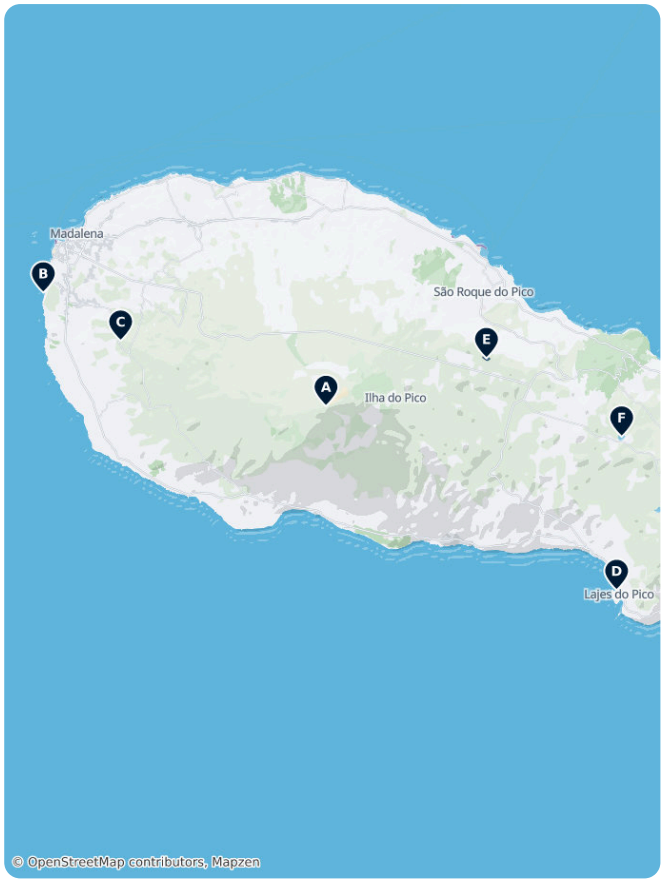
Whale and dolphin watching runs from about April to October. Sperm whales live near the island all year. Blue, fin and sei whales pass in spring, and June to September has the calmest seas.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	16° / 18° Feels like 11°	14° / 11°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Windy
February	Good Good for hiking	16° / 18° Feels like 10°	14° / 11°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Windy
March	Good Good for hiking	16° / 18° Feels like 10°	14° / 11°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Windy
April	Good Good for hiking	16° / 18° Feels like 11°	14° / 11°	13 rainy days · Dry air
May	Great Great for hiking	18° / 20° Feels like 14°	16° / 13°	
June	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 23°	18° / 15°	
July	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 25°	21° / 18°	Muggy, humid air · UV 8 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 26°	22° / 20°	Muggy, humid air
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 25°	21° / 18°	Humid air
October	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 23° Feels like 17°	19° / 15°	15 rainy days
November	Good Good for wildlife watching	18° / 21° Feels like 14°	17° / 13°	14 rainy days · Windy
December	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	17° / 19° Feels like 11°	15° / 12°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Windy

Best months: June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Montanha do Pico is the highest peak in Portugal. The climb to the crater and the small summit cone takes about 3 to 4 hours up and the same down. Book the climb online in advance, and read the rules on the official Pico Mountain page.
- B Pico Vineyard Landscape is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thousands of small plots, called currais, are enclosed by black basalt walls that protect the vines from wind and sea spray. Criação Velha and Santa Luzia are the best areas to see them.
- C Gruta das Torres is the longest lava cave in the Azores. Guided groups walk through the first 450 m with a helmet and a lamp.
- D Whalers Museum in Lajes do Pico is in old whaling-boat warehouses. It tells the story of whaling on the island from the 19th century to the 1980s.
- E Lagoa do Capitão is a lake in the highland pastures. It is a good place to see birds and local plants.
- F Lagoa do Caiado is a small lagoon above Prainha, inside a protected area.

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What to experience

- Go whale and dolphin watching. Tours leave from Lajes do Pico, the traditional base, and from Madalena. The season is about April to October.
- Taste local wine among the stone-walled plots near Criação Velha. The main grapes are Verdelho, Arinto and Terrantez.
- Spend a night at the crater of Mount Pico. Overnight stays are limited and need a reservation.
- Swim in the natural lava-rock pools along the coast in summer.
- Visit Casa dos Vulcões in Lajido de Santa Luzia on a cloudy day. This volcano centre has an earthquake simulator and an interactive dome about volcanoes and the Earth.

Day trips

Pico is close to two other islands. Both trips use a ferry, so check the timetable first.

- Ⓐ Faial: about 30 minutes by ferry from Madalena to Horta, with several crossings in summer. Horta has a harbour, a fort and a museum. The Capelinhos volcano, from the 1957 to 1958 eruption, and the large Caldeira crater are the main natural sights.
- Ⓑ São Jorge: across a channel about 20 km wide. Ferries connect Pico with Velas and Calheta. Sailings change by season. The island is known for its coastal fajãs, small flat areas at the foot of cliffs.



Where to explore

Pico is part of the central group of the Azores, together with Faial and São Jorge.

- Nearest islands: Faial and São Jorge.
- Other islands for a longer trip: Terceira and São Miguel.

Getting there

- By air: Pico Airport is on the north coast, about 8 km from Madalena. There are flights from Lisbon, Terceira and Ponta Delgada. The other option is to fly to Horta on Faial and take the ferry.
- By sea: ferries connect Madalena and São Roque do Pico with Horta on Faial and with Velas and Calheta on São Jorge. Service is reduced in winter and can stop in storms. See the timetable of Atlânticoline.

Getting around

- By car: renting a car is the most practical way to reach the trailheads, vineyards and villages. Cars can be rented in Madalena.
- On foot: distances between villages are long, and the mountain trails are steep.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Low

Villages are small and far apart, and the mountain trails are steep.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Roads climb steeply from the coast and distances are long.

Driving

- A car is worth it on Pico. Sights, trailheads and villages are far apart, and a car saves much time.
- Mountain weather can differ much from the coast. Check the forecast before driving to the highlands.

Food & drink

Pico is known for white wine. The vines grow in black lava rock close to the sea. Verdelho was the famous grape in the 19th century, when the wine was sent to northern Europe and Russia. Arinto and Terrantez are also grown.

Fishing is a main activity on the island. Eat fresh fish in the harbour towns of Madalena, São Roque do Pico and Lajes do Pico.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Safety & health

The main risk on Pico is the mountain.

- Weather on Mount Pico changes fast, and the highlands get very heavy rain. Wear suitable shoes and clothes, and carry water.
- Begin the descent from the summit at least four hours before sunset.
- Crampons are required when there is snow or ice on the trail.
- The emergency number is 112.

History

People settled on Pico in the 15th century. Franciscan monks brought the Verdelho vine, and wine became the main trade. In the 19th century a vine disease damaged the vineyards. The walls and plots in the Pico Vineyard Landscape still show how much work this took.

Sperm whale hunting was a major industry from the 19th century. It ended in the 1980s. The Whalers Museum in Lajes do Pico and the former whale factory museum in São Roque do Pico now tell this story. Today the same waters are used for whale watching.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



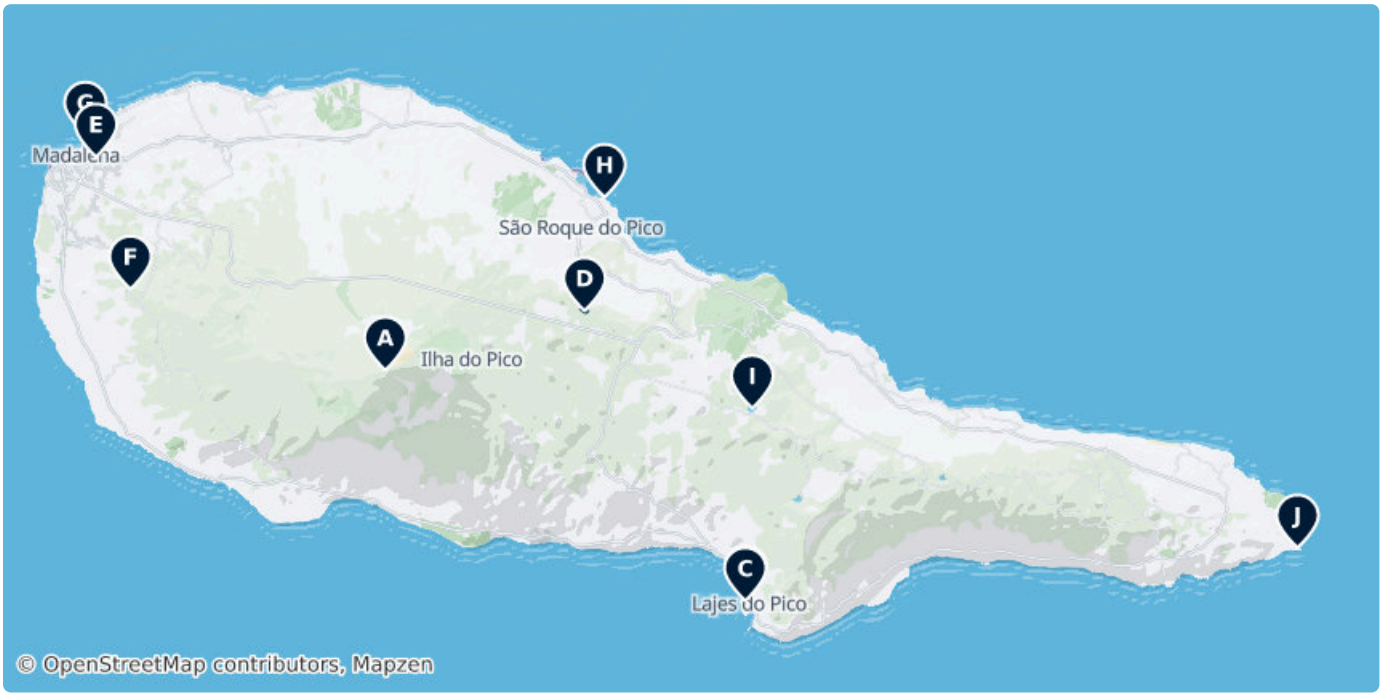
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LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Pico Island Essentials

Pico Island is defined by Portugal's highest peak, the 2,351-meter Mount Pico, and its UNESCO-designated vineyard culture. This selection highlights the island's volcanic origins through the Gruta das Torres lava tubes and high-altitude crater lakes like Lagoa do Capitão. Explore the maritime history at the Whalers Museum in Lajes do Pico, or observe marine life with Espaço Talassa. Architectural landmarks include traditional red windmills and the award-winning Cella Bar, while the Museu do Vinho showcases viticulture practiced in basalt stone corrals.





A Mount Pico

Mount Pico is a currently dormant stratovolcano located on Pico Island, in the mid-Atlantic archipelago of the Azores.

9950, Portugal (38.46872, -28.39928)



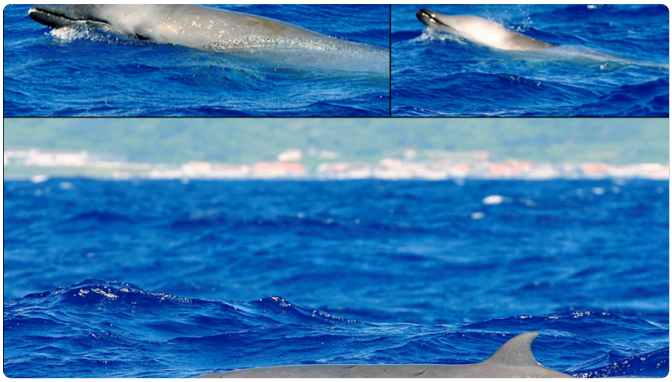
B Whalers Museum

Housed in 19th-century boat houses in Lajes do Pico, this site documents the island's historical whaling industry through tools, scrimshaw art, and traditional whaleboats.

Rua dos Baleeiros 13, 9930-143 Lajes do Pico (38.39631, -28.25342)

Tu–Su 10:00–17:30

visitazores.com/en/explore/museu-dos..., +351 292 679 340



C Espaço Talassa - Observação de Cetáceos

A pioneer in sustainable whale and dolphin watching based in Lajes do Pico, featuring a small sea library and an observation post for marine biology research.

9930 Lajes do Pico (38.39575, -28.25376)

espacotalassa.com, +351 292 672 010



D Lagoa do Capitão

A freshwater body 790 meters above sea level, providing views of Mount Pico and a habitat for endemic Azorean flora and migratory birds.

9940, Portugal (38.48755, -28.31876)

E Museu do Vinho do Pico

Located in a former 17th-century Carmelite convent in Madalena, featuring a lookout tower and a forest of ancient dragon trees surrounding traditional vineyards.

(Unnamed Road), 9950362, Portugal (38.53615, -28.51625)

Apr-Sep Tu–Su	10:00–17:30
Oct-Mar Tu–Su	09:30–17:00



F Cave of Towers

Gruta das Torres, is a lava cave, a geological formation of volcanic origin formed from the flow and cooling of subterranean magma rivers.

Grutas da Torre, 9950, Portugal (38.49437, -28.50235)



G Cella Bar

An architectural landmark in Madalena merging a classic stone building with a contemporary timber structure designed to resemble a wine barrel.

Lugar da Barca, 9950-303 Madalena, Portugal
(38.54305, -28.52053)

+351 292 623 654

H Moinho da Avenida do Mar

A restored 19th-century red structure on the coast of São Roque do Pico, serving as a lookout point with views toward the island of São Jorge.

(38.52340, -28.31066)



I Lagoa do Caiado

Lagoa do Caiado is the largest lake on Pico Island, Azores. The high-altitude lake is located on the Achada Plateau, an extensive volcanic...

9940, Portugal (38.45669, -28.25091)



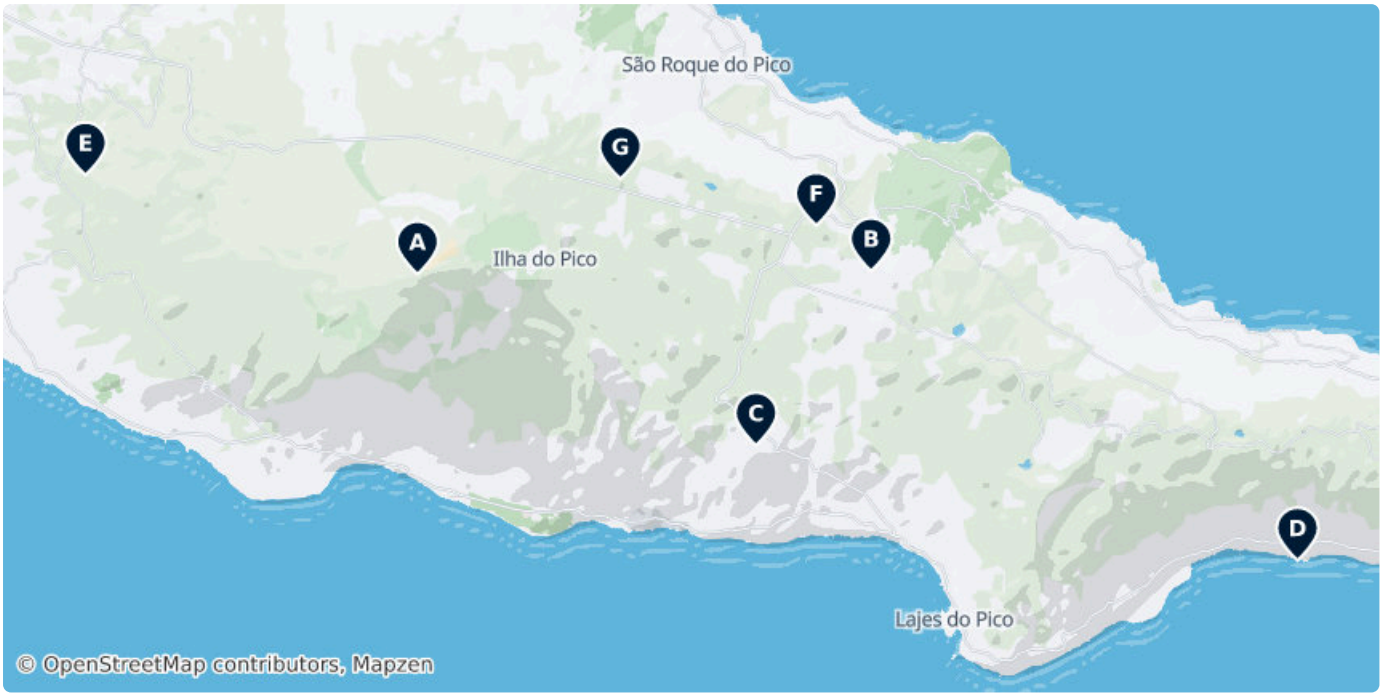
J Farol Ponta da Ilha

A 19-meter-high tower at the easternmost point of the island, featuring modernist architectural elements from the mid-20th century.

59 Caminho do Farol, 9930211, Portugal
(38.41251, -28.03047)

Volcanic Peaks of Pico

Pico Island contains some of the most dramatic volcanic landscapes in the Azores, centered around the towering Mount Pico, Portugal's highest point at 2,351 meters. This collection highlights the island's diverse geological formations, from the historical lava fields of Cabeços do Mistério to the series of scoria cones and craters that form the central volcanic ridge. These sites illustrate the island's basaltic volcanism and complex tectonic history within the Macaronesian region.





A Mount Pico

Mount Pico is a currently dormant stratovolcano located on Pico Island, in the mid-Atlantic archipelago of the Azores.

9950, Portugal (38.46872, -28.39928)



B List of volcanoes in Portugal

Although there are no active volcanoes in the continental territory of Portugal, apart from geological remnants of ancient volcanism, the...

9940, Portugal (38.46942, -28.27498)

C Cabeços do Fogo

A series of volcanic cones on the central ridge featuring dense endemic vegetation and protected status as a nature reserve.

9930, Portugal (38.43204, -28.30651)

D Aguada

Volcanic peak located on the southern slopes of Pico Island.

(Unnamed Road), 9930, Portugal (38.40734, -28.15813)

dev.igeo.pt/produtos/geodesia/vg/rgn/ficha.asp

E Bravo

A volcanic peak situated in the western region of the island.

9950, Portugal (38.48996, -28.49030)

F Corre Agua

Volcanic cone located on the island's central plateau.

9940, Portugal (38.47914, -28.28999)

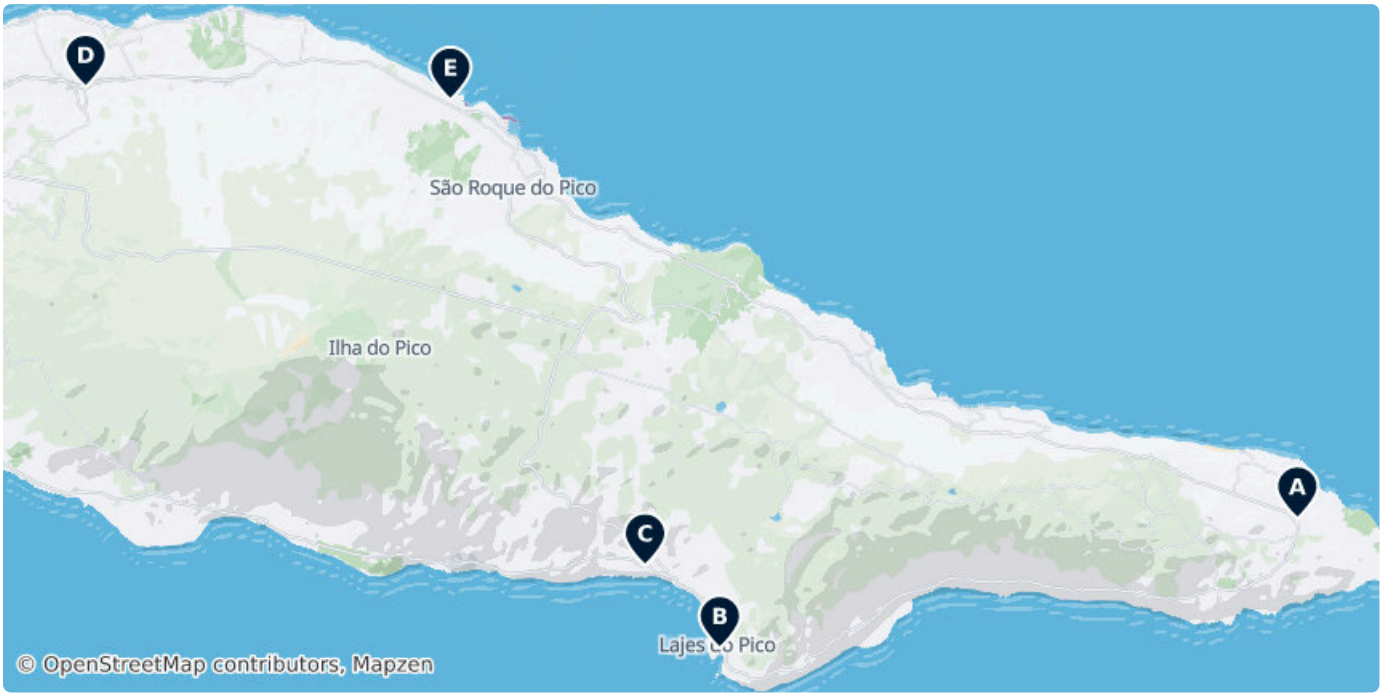
G Cabeco de Macela

Volcanic cone within the central volcanic complex offering views over the northern coastline.

9940, Portugal (38.48918, -28.34370)

Historic Churches of Pico

Pico Island's religious architecture reflects its deep Catholic roots and the unique Azorean Cult of the Holy Spirit. This selection features significant parish churches across the Lajes do Pico and Madalena municipalities, showcasing traditional stone masonry and local history. Included is a notable "Império," a distinctive colorful chapel central to the island's Holy Spirit festivals, providing insight into the cultural and spiritual identity of the local communities.





A Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Piedade

Catholic temple located in the parish of Piedade, within the municipality of Lajes do Pico.

Caminho do Calhau, 9930204, Portugal
(38.42758, -28.05932)



B Igreja da Santíssima Trindade

Catholic parish church situated in the historic town of Lajes do Pico.

5 Rua Padre Manuel José Lopes, 9930146, Portugal
(38.39385, -28.25138)



C Igreja de São Bartolomeu

Catholic church located in the coastal village of Silveira, part of the Lajes do Pico municipality.

(38.41536, -28.27622)



D Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Boa Nova

Christian temple located in the parish of Bandeiras, within the municipality of Madalena.

1 Rua da Igreja, 9950026, Portugal (38.53980, -28.46223)



E Império do Divino Espírito Santo de Santo António

Traditional Azorean shrine dedicated to the Cult of the Holy Spirit, located in the parish of Santo António.

6 Rua da Igreja, 9940, Portugal (38.53653, -28.34097)

DATA SOURCES

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- Espaço Talassa - Observação de Cetáceos — "True's beaked whale observed off Pico." by Figure 8 from Aguilar de Soto N, Martín V, Silva M, Edler R, Reyes C, Carrillo M, Schiavi A, Morales T, García-Ovide B, Sanchez-Mora A, Garcia-Tavero N, Steiner L, Scheer M, Gockel R, Walker D, Villa E, Szlama P, Eriksson IK, Tejedor M, Perez-Gil M, Quaresma J, Bachara W, Carroll E. (2017) True's beaked whale (Mesoplodon mirus) in Macaronesia. PeerJ e3059, CC BY 4.0
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