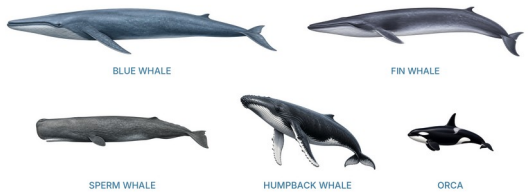
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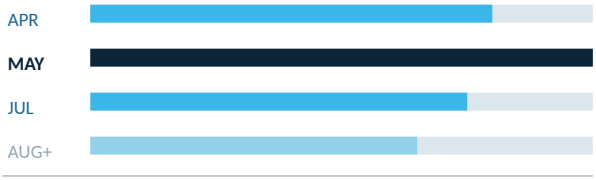
EUROPE · NORTH ATLANTIC

Azores, Portugal

Sperm, blue, fin, sei and humpback whales, orca and pilot whale · April – October



SIGHTING PROBABILITY



BEST MONTHS
Apr–May · Jun–Sep

SEASON
Apr – Oct

§ 01 INTRODUCTION

The Azores archipelago, in the middle of the North Atlantic, is one of Europe's richest places for cetaceans: up to 28 species have been recorded in its waters, thanks to the great depths found very close to the shore.

Sperm whales are resident all year, peaking from June to September, while in spring (April–June) large baleen whales — blue, fin and sei — migrate through on their way to their Arctic feeding grounds. Summer brings more dolphin and pilot whale activity. Whale watching relies on a unique traditional method: land-based "vigias" (lookouts) who spot the animals from coastal viewpoints and guide the boats by radio.

§ 02 ETHICS

Whale-watching ethics

The Azores have their own regulations on minimum distances, the number of boats allowed around an animal at once and time spent with it. Officially licensed operators follow these rules; avoid any unlicensed boat or anyone promising to swim with sperm whales outside regulated activities.

§ 03 IN THE FIELD

Practical tips

01
Book early in the morning: the sea is usually calmer before the afternoon breeze picks up.

02
Bring warm, waterproof clothing — the North Atlantic can be rough even in summer.

03
Land-based "vigias" are part of the traditional Azorean method; ask whether the operator works with them, as it greatly improves the success rate.

04
Pico and Faial are the historic home of whale watching; São Miguel is the best option if you are staying in Ponta Delgada.

05
A 100-400mm zoom — sperm whales usually show only their back, and their tail when they dive.

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