

Terceira Island, The Azores

In January, my mom and I took a 6-day trip to the island of Terceira, in the Azores. Terceira combines colonial Portuguese architecture, Portuguese cuisine, green landscapes reminiscent of Ireland and a volcanic geological history that is still very evident today. You can view my photos [here](#).

The Azores, a 9-volcanic island archipelago belonging to Portugal is nearly equidistant from Portugal and from the African continent, and only slightly further from North America. In other words, it's in the middle of nowhere, relatively on its own in the middle of the Atlantic. That being said, it's only about a 4-hour direct flight from Boston, the airport from which we departed.

We booked our flights, hotel and rental car through [Azores Getaways](#). For two people, with an upgrade to a 4-star hotel, the [Terceira Mar Hotel](#), the cost totaled U.S.\$1602. Our only expenses beyond this initial charge were one tank of gas, snacks and dinners. The hotel offered an impressive buffet breakfast so we didn't need full lunches.

[Terceira Mar Hotel](#)

Portões de S.Pedro, 1
9700 - 097 - Angra do Heroísmo

We were very happy to have rented a car. It allowed us to explore more out-of-the-way corners of the island and to have more flexibility to do less on rainier days and pack more in on the sunny days. We also figured out after a couple days that on this island that's only about 19 miles east-west and 12 miles north-south, the weather can vary drastically from one part of the island to another. The center could be fogged in, with rain the capital, but it might be perfectly sunny on the west coast. The roads are narrow and the driving could be daunting to some, however.

If you prefer not to rent a car, Azores Getaways offers daily excursions to all the major sites on the island that they do try to time according to weather forecasts. We signed up for a boat trip that ended up being cancelled due to bad weather. We did attend the dinner the last night at a farmhouse that was quite fun—perhaps a bit cheesy, but it was nice to get to talk with some of the other visitors. As everyone arrives and departs on the same flight, you do see a lot of the same people every day. In this sense, an Azores Getaway (especially with the optional excursions) would be a great option for solo travelers.

While we did enjoy staying at the Terceira Mar with its seaview balconies, full gym, excellent restaurant and indoor pool (it was too chilly to use the outdoor pool), the less expensive option, the Angra Garden Hotel, might appeal more especially to those without a car who'd like to stay right in the center of Terceira's capital, Angra do Heroísmo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Still, the Terceira Mar was only about a 15-minute walk from the center. And we very much appreciated the 7am check-in upon arrival!

The weather in Terceira in January is ify, but it seems the weather can be ify and not much warmed in the spring, so January with its fewer crowds is actually a great time to visit. Just be prepared for some days of rain and (hopefully) some days of sun. The weather was pretty much always in the 60s. Bizarrely, the temperatures only drop a few degrees at night.

We organized most of our days around hikes, in particular those outlined on the [Visit Azores website](#). In addition to the hiking, some other highlights included:

- A visit to the caldera, Serre do Cume

- A visit to the extinct volcano, Algar do Carvão
- A visit to the Duque da Terceira botanical gardens in Angra

Here are some other helpful links for planning your trip:

- [Visit Azores](#)
- [Exploring Terceira](#)
- [Lonely Planet](#)

We also ate at a number of great restaurants, including:

- [Tasca das Tias](#)
- [Monte Brasil Restaurant at the Terceira Mar Hotel](#)
- [Q.B. \(the fancier upstairs restaurant, though you can also visit the downstairs food court\)](#)

And don't forget to check out my photos [here](#). The labels include links to each hike.