

# Hiking in the Azores

ADVENTURES IN A BREATHTAKING ARCHIPELAGO



Wilderness Travel



# Overview



## TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- Length:** 10 days  
**Arrive:** São Miguel Island, Azores  
**Depart:** São Miguel Island, Azores  
**Lodging:** 9 nights hotels  
**Meals:** All meals included except 1 dinner  
**Activity:** Hiking & Trekking

**Trip Level:** 1 2 ③ 4 5 6

8 hiking days on moderate trails (some steep), 3-5 hours a day, van support. Island weather may dictate itinerary changes where necessary.

## QUESTIONS?

Our Area Specialists are your single point of contact and would be happy to answer any questions about your trip!

800.368.2794 | 510.558.2488

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike and explore four lush volcanic islands, each with a unique culture and landscape
- Taste Pico Island's white wines from age-old vineyards
- Savor catch-of-the-day fish and unique local cheeses on each island
- Go whale-watching in one of the world's largest whale sanctuaries
- Stay in a converted 16th century fort, a 17th century townhouse, and the Art Deco grandeur of Terra Nostra Garden Hotel



# Introduction



Come to an island-world of rustic villages, lake-filled calderas, bubbling hot springs, and ancient vineyards—the Azores! On this volcanic archipelago just a five-hour flight from Boston, we explore four islands: São Miguel, Faial, São Jorge, and spectacular Pico, each with its own personality and terrain. We'll hike along crater rims, cross rugged moorlands above a deep blue sea, and follow ancient canadas (pathways) that link farms and villages. Complementing our hikes, we'll head out for whale watching, dine on the abundant fresh seafood, and relish the unhurried pace of Azorean life.

## TRIP DATES

May 11-20, 2025

August 22-31, 2025

September 15-24, 2025

April 27-May 6, 2026

May 10-19, 2026

August 21-30, 2026

September 15-24, 2026



# Itinerary



## Overnight: Hotel Talisman

With a great location in the center of town, near Ponta Delgada's cafes and historic churches, the Talisman is a historic 17th century building converted into a charming hotel. Guest rooms differ in size and shape, but most have views of the port. The hotel is decorated in an Art Deco style with lovely seating areas on the first floor. The rooftop pool is a nice spot for a refreshing dip before dinner.

**Meals: D**



## DAY 1 SÃO MIGUEL ISLAND / PONTA DELGADA

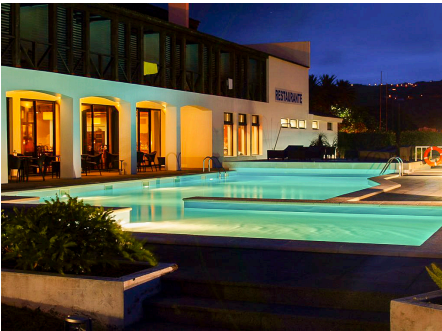
We meet at 6:00 pm in Ponta Delgada, the Azorean capital. After a trip briefing, we gather for a Welcome Dinner and toast the start of our Azorean adventure with wine from the island of Pico. Saúde! Overnight in the city's Old Town.

You can arrive in the afternoon of Day 1 or anytime prior to Day 1. If you wish to arrive a day early, we are happy to book a hotel room for you in Ponta Delgada (an "on your own" expense).

**An important note:** While we work hard to make this itinerary as accurate as possible, the planned daily activities are subject to change as necessary, depending on weather conditions and ferry schedules at the time. Our guides are very knowledgeable and will always provide you with a worthwhile alternative. We will do our very best to follow this itinerary, but please bring your spirit of adventure and flexibility, and be aware that some changes may be necessary. In the event we need to make changes, the goal is to do most, if not all, activities during our time on each island.



# Itinerary



## **Overnight: Pousada Forte Hotel**

The Pousada Forte is a restored fortress set along a promenade on Horta's port. It offers comfortable rooms overlooking the harbor and a great swimming pool. The views of Pico Island are breathtaking.

## **Meals: B, L, D**

**Sete Cidades Hiking Details:** 5.5 miles, 2.5-3 hours, 400 feet ascent/descent

**Levada Hiking Details:** 4.7 miles, 3 hours, 450 feet ascent/descent

## **DAYS 2-3 SETE CIDADES HIKE / FAIAL ISLAND: SHEARWATER COLONY, LEVADA HIKE & PONTA DOS CAPELINHOS**

We set out for an easy hike on the rim of the twin lakes of Sete Cidades, one very blue (Lagoa Azul) and the other distinctly green (Lagoa Verde). Views on our hike stretch the length of São Miguel, the largest island in the archipelago. An afternoon flight brings us to Faial, known as “the blue island” for its long rows of hydrangea hedges. In 1957, Faial erupted over the course of 18 months, adding almost a square mile to the western edge of the island. While we’re here, we’ll immerse ourselves in its volcanic story. After dinner at the hotel, we head to Castelo Branco, a rocky peninsula to observe thousands of Cory’s shearwaters returning to land after a day foraging at sea. Another day is a hike to the youngest and westernmost point of Faial, where the massive volcanic eruption occurred in 1957. Before visiting the newest part of the island, we hike along a levada, or water channel, that contours the lush hillsides above the Geosite. The track alongside affords us fabulous coastal views, varied volcanic features, endemic vegetation, and the possibility to watch some of the island’s birds, including the tiny goldcrest, which flits restlessly between branches, with often just the flash of its spiky, golden crownfeathers to be seen. After a picnic lunch we’ll head to the Ponta dos Capelinhos, the volcanic formation formed in 1957, with its rocky barren features and white lighthouse. The lower part of the lighthouse remains buried by the eruptions. We’ll visit the interpretive center, built underground and later take the spiral staircase (66 feet) to the top of the lighthouse for a bird’s-eye view of a wild landscape that’s just over 50 years old.



# Itinerary



## **Overnight: Hotel Caravelas**

The Caravelas offers clean, comfortable rooms with views of Faial Island and the harbor and a central location for the ferry. The hotel offers an excellent buffet breakfast.

## **Meals: B, L, D**

**Hiking Details:** Moderate Hike, 6.5 miles, 3.5 hours, 100 feet ascent, 2,300 feet descent; Strenuous Hike, 5.6 miles, 8-9 hours, 3,700 feet ascent/descent

**Whale Watching:** approximately 3 hours

## **DAYS 4-5 PICO ISLAND: CAMINHO DOS BURROS, OPTIONAL CLIMB OF PICO, WHALE WATCHING & WINERY**

A morning ferry crossing of about 30 minutes brings us to the island of Pico, crowned by a dormant 7,713-foot volcano, Portugal's highest. We have a "moderate" hike on the Caminho dos Burros ("Path of the Donkeys"). This old trail connects the north and south coast of the island and has fabulous views towards Pico Mountain and across the sea to the sharply defined ridgeline of São Jorge Island. Descending gently through scrub and woodland, we reach a wider track that takes us down to the Forest Nature Reserve of Misterio da Prainha, an ideal spot for our picnic. After lunch, we'll head to the Gruta das Torres ("Grotto of Towers"), near Madalena. Formed over 1,500 years ago, it is the biggest lava tube in all of Portugal. We'll don hard hats and carry lamps for an hour's guided tour exploring these intriguing lava tunnels. A "strenuous" option is a climb of Pico Mountain, a very steep climb to the summit at 7,713 feet and not to be taken lightly (we will not be able to do it if the weather conditions are poor). Another day we'll set out by RIB boat for whale-watching. Sperm whales as well as humpback, minke, pilot, fin, and blue whales are seen at different points in the year. Bottlenose, spotted, striped, common, and Risso's dolphins are also found here. Following lunch at a local restaurant, we'll visit the whaling museum, then make our way to the island's main wine-growing area. We'll be met at Czar, a local winery, where the owner will bring us into. On Day 4, we enjoy a delightful dinner in one of the best restaurants on Pico Island, with superb views toward Faial Island. Dinner is on your own on Day 5, and the Trip Leader will be happy to make recommendations.



# Itinerary



## Overnight: Hotel São Jorge Garden

The simple but comfortable Hotel S. Jorge Garden has guest rooms with panoramic views of Pico Island, a friendly bar, and a lovely saltwater swimming pool. In the evenings, guests can hear the sounds of the local Cory's shearwaters coming back to their colony to roost for the night.

## Meals: B, L, D

**Hiking Details:** 6.2 miles, 4.5-5 hours, ascent 1,400 feet, descent 1,400 feet

## DAYS 6-7 SÃO JORGE ISLAND: CHEESE TASTING, FAJÃ DOS CUBRES, COFFEE TASTING & HIKE

An early ferry ride brings us to Velas, the picturesque principal town on São Jorge Island. São Jorge is reputed to produce the best cheese of all the islands—in fact, there are more dairy cattle on this island than people! We check into our simple accommodation, Hotel S. Jorge Garden, then visit the island's only remaining family cheese producers who milk just 40 cows and we'll hear about their production, sample some of their much-prized "Canada" cheese. We'll have lunch and head to the northern coast for our hike from Fajã dos Cubres ("Fajã of the Goldenrods"), through the partly abandoned villages of Fajã dos Tijolos ("Fajã of the Tiles") and Fajã do Belo ("Fajã of Beauty") and into the pretty village of Fajã da Caldeira de Santo Cristo and its quaint white church. Another day on São Jorge Island begins with a stop at Café Nunes, where we'll meet our local guide and her family. Her father operates the largest commercial coffee plantation in Europe, producing Arabica beans for local consumption. We'll enjoy the earthy flavor of an espresso here before heading out on the trail. Our hike starts in Vimes, on the south coast following old, cobbled trails. Turning into the Fajã dos Bodes ("Fajã of the Goats"), we head steeply up to savor vistas over to the island of Pico and its iconic mountain as well as the rugged coastline of São Jorge before popping out into the village of Lourais. A steep descent (hiking poles are recommended) brings us down to Fajã de São João. This town has narrow, cobbled streets and a small fishing harbor. The only café, opposite the village church, is our final destination. Cold beers are on order after our demanding yet satisfying hike! Dinner on Day 6 is in a typical local restaurant. On Day 7, we'll enjoy dinner at a wonderful small restaurant with views over to Pico and Faial. All dishes are home-cooked using only local meat and fish, accompanied by organic vegetables and herbs grown in the owners' garden.



# Itinerary



## **Overnight: Terra Nostra Garden Hotel**

The historic Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, surrounded by calderas and thermal springs, is the perfect spot to enjoy São Miguel's natural geothermal wonders. You can step right out of your room and straight into the garden to relax in bubbling hot springs. The hotel is sleek and modern, surrounded by vast gardens that date back to 1775.

## **Meals: B, L, D**

**Hiking Details:** Lagao das Furnas: 2.5 miles, 1.5 hours, level ground; Optional afternoon: 3 miles, 2 hours, 630 feet, 740 feet descent

## **DAYS 8-9 SÃO JORGE / SÃO MIGUEL ISLAND: FURNAS, THERMAL BATH & COZIDO**

We start the day with a walk along the western peninsula of São Jorge to the old lighthouse at Rosais. After lunch in a local restaurant we fly back to São Miguel, where we are whisked off to the picturesque town of Furnas and our hotel, the Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, an Art Deco hotel dating to the 1930s and surrounded by a large 19th century garden with canals and lakes. If we arrive in the late afternoon, we'll take a stroll around the gardens, then enjoy the thermally heated pools, with their rich iron-red waters, a good way to soothe tired muscles. On our final full day, our explorations are based around the 19th century spa village of Furnas, nestled inside a huge caldera with many active fumaroles. Taking a short drive to a higher, water-filled caldera, we'll hike along the lake's pretty shoreline. Our hike's end coincides with a chance to see local restaurant owners coming to retrieve their cook pots buried in hot soil in the geothermally active area at the northern end of Furnas Lake. The famous cozido nas caldeiras, a traditional dish, is cooked in pots set in the geothermally heated soil. The large pots are carefully extracted by two men using long metal poles, then driven down the hill to be served up in Furnas as lunch and dinner. There is a choice in the afternoon, either to hike or to relax in the thermal pools and spa of the charming Terra Nostra Garden Hotel. If hiking, the guide will decide the most appropriate hike for those walking, as again, there is a choice: either a linear hike along the north coast with a possible swim in the sea, or a circular hike higher up among trees and along a river with waterfalls. Both are of similar length and time. Our Farewell Dinner at the Terra Nostra Garden Hotel is a treat—the traditional cozido meal, with mouth-watering flavors of tender meat (beef, pork, and chicken) and assorted rice and vegetables, and we pair it superbly with the deep red wines from Pico Island.



# Itinerary



Meals: B

## DAY 10 TEA PLANTATION / PONTA DELGADA / DEPARTURE

This morning we make a call at one of only two tea plantations in Europe. Chá Porto Formoso is set on the north coast of São Miguel, where climate and soil conditions have allowed tea to thrive far from its native terrain in Asia. Tea production on São Miguel started at the end of the 19th century with seeds and techniques brought from China. Sitting out on the wooden veranda overlooking the neatly clipped tea bushes that sweep down toward the sea, we'll savor a cup! The teas produced here have an especially aromatic flavor and make a lasting memento of the islands to take home with you. We'll transfer to the city of Ponta Delgada, São Miguel's capital, for an early lunch and arrive at San Miguel Airport by 1:00 pm, in time for your international flight.



# Pricing

## TRIP COST

**Prices are per person, based on double occupancy  
2025**

\$7,695 (8-12 members)

\$7,995 (4-7 members)

Single supplement: \$970

*Please contact us for future years' pricing*

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. All costs are per person, based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

## PAYMENT TERMS

At time of reservation: \$600

90 days prior to departure: Balance

## CANCELLATION & TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 91 days prior to departure: No Charge!

61-90 days prior to departure: 25% of trip cost

46-60 days prior to departure: 50% of trip cost

45 days or less: 100% of trip cost

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend you purchase travel insurance. You can take advantage of a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See our website for details:

[www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance](http://www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance)

## TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert leadership of a Wilderness Travel Trip Leader
- Accommodations in hotels
- All meals included except 1 dinner as indicated in Detailed Itinerary
- A glass of wine or beer with dinner
- All ground and internal air transportation, and baggage handling from meeting until departure
- All activities as indicated in Detailed Itinerary

## TRIP DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Travel to and from the arrival and departure location as indicated in Detailed Itinerary
- Additional hotel nights outside the trip's scheduled dates
- Optional gratuities to Trip Leaders or staff
- Optional travel insurance
- Other expenses of a personal nature (some alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.)

## CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice will reflect the difference in trip cost.



# Arrival & Departure

## ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

**Suggested Airport:** Ponta Delgada Airport (PDL)

**Suggested Date & Time:** The morning of Day 1 or anytime prior to Day 1

**Meeting Place:** You will meet your Trip Leader in the Lobby of the first hotel at 6:00 pm on Day 1. Upon arrival at the Ponta Delgada Airport, taxis are readily available outside the terminal and the transfer cost into town is approximately €10. There is also a bus that costs around €2.

## DEPARTURE

**Date & Time:** Day 10, anytime after 3:00 pm

**Suggested Airport:** Ponta Delgada Airport (PDL)

Please do not book a departing flight leaving before 3:00 pm, as we begin our day on the other side of the island and have some scheduled activities and lunch before dropping the group at the airport at around 1:00 pm.

## INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to and from the Azores.

There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 1-800-655-4053 in the US or 1-800-670-2605 in Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found on Exito's website at [www.exitotravel.com](http://www.exitotravel.com).

Depending on your routing, it is necessary to depart from the US one or possibly two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

**Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip.** Once your tickets have been purchased, please send us a copy of your airline schedule. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

## EXTRA HOTEL NIGHTS

If you are arriving one or more days early, we can book extra nights for you at the group hotel in Ponta Delgada (an 'on your own' expense).



# Trip Leaders

Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders have a passion and a joy for creating an unforgettable journey. We are extremely proud of them and the incredible travel experiences they make possible. For more information, including client comments about them and which specific departures they will be leading, please visit [wildernesstravel.com/leaders](http://wildernesstravel.com/leaders).



## SKYE MCDONALD

Skye McDonald lives in Scotland's Highland capital, Inverness. She has worked as a Trip Leader in 35 countries since the millennium and lived in Germany, France, and Tanzania. "Bringing understanding between peoples of very different cultures and backgrounds is one of the joys of being a Trip Leader, and of course, the chance to make friends around the world." Closer to home, she delights in sharing the glories of her native Scotland, and says that a good day scaling some of the beautiful Scottish mountains is hard to beat. Skye speaks German, French, beginners' Portuguese, and unusually, a smattering of Swahili from earlier years as a volunteer agricultural officer in Tanzania. Life continues to be an adventure for Skye, who has recently taken up bee-keeping, wild-water swimming, and scuba diving.



## DAVID MONTEIRO

David Monteiro was born in Mindelo, Cape Verde, an archipelago on the west coast of Africa, and moved to Portugal with his family when he was a child. After working as a CPA for more than 20 years, he felt the need for a change and began to lead hiking, mountain biking, and rock-climbing trips, all sports he had enjoyed since his childhood. When not guiding, David indulges in his passion for photography, literature, and history.



## NUNO PORTELA

Madeira native Nuno Portela has a deep knowledge of his island's many natural wonders as well as its unique culture. After studying business in mainland Portugal, he returned to Madeira to become a certified professional mountain guide, now with more than 20 years of experience. His passion for Madeira's people and traditions makes him the perfect ambassador to this unique island.



# What to Expect

## WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

This trip is rated **Level 3, Moderate**, according to our trip grading system. You will need to be comfortable hiking up to 7 miles a day and being on your feet for 5 hours a day. With the exception of one day, there are no alternative hiking options, so you will need to be able to keep up with the moderate but steady hiking pace of the group. Trail conditions, weather, and the group's level of fitness can affect hiking times and pacing.

### Average Hiking Day

- 6 miles
- 3-4 hours
- 800 feet gain and 1,200 feet loss

### Challenge Day

- Day 6 - 5.5 miles, 4 hours, 2,300 feet gain, and 400 feet loss; includes 1.5 hours by ferry and 2 hours of driving

## TERRAIN

We'll hike along crater rims in a volcanic landscape, traverse rugged moorlands above a deep blue sea, and follow ancient canadas (pathways) that crisscross the islands linking farms and villages. Occasionally there are steeper paths and steps on the coastal walks, and the ground can be uneven with some sharp rocks. If there has been rain, it can be muddy and slippery. Hiking poles will be beneficial on many days. Many of the trails are on rocky and uneven ground, so it is important that your footwear is comfortable and has a good hiking sole. On non-hiking days, we'll still be on foot for many hours as we explore the towns and sites.

## WEATHER

The Azores have a subtropical maritime climate with mild temperatures throughout the year. In the summer, temperatures average between the mid-60s°F to the low 80s°F during the day and the 50s°F and 60s°F at night. It can be humid, and although it is usually sunny in the summer, clouds and rain is a very real possibility all year round—it is not uncommon for rain in the morning and sunshine in the afternoon. A light waterproof shell of a rain jacket and pants in your day pack are highly recommended for the short rainstorms that may pass us while hiking.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Our accommodations include a refurbished 16th century fort, a 17th century townhouse, and an Art Deco hotel with geothermally heated bathing pools. Since they are in historic buildings, the rooms are not always of uniform or international size. Our leaders do their best to assign rooms in a fair way so that all participants experience an equal advantage throughout the trip as a whole. Single rooms can be requested but are not always available, due to the limited space in the hotels. If you prefer a single room, please make your request as early as possible.



# What to Expect

**CUISINE** We'll enjoy the fresh and varied cuisine of the Azores which include many Portuguese specialties. The islands are known for excellent seafood, spicy stews, sweet desserts, and local wines from the island of Pico. Lunch will be picnic-style, at our hotel, or at one of the local restaurants. Dinner will be at our hotel or a local restaurant in town. Please note that in Europe, the dinner hour is considerably later than what it is in the US. We do our best to secure early reservations for our groups, but most often the evening meal will be at 7:30 pm.

**TRANSPORTATION** Our van will transport the group's luggage, so you only need to carry a daypack for items you need during the day (rain gear, sweater, camera, water bottle, etc.). Trip members are always free to skip a day's hike and travel to the next destination in the support vehicle (or remain at the hotel if we are not transferring that day). On one day, we will spend a few hours in a 16-seater RIB for whale watching. We will also take ferries between the islands and take various forms of transportation on each island.

AVERAGE DAILY MAX/MIN °F												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Ponta Delgada	63/54	63/52	63/54	63/54	68/55	72/59	75/63	79/64	77/64	72/61	68/57	64/55
RAINFALL - INCHES												
Ponta Delgada	4.7	3.9	4.1	2.6	2.4	1.6	1.0	1.2	3.1	4.1	4.7	3.9



# Additional Information

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 or email us at [info@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:info@wildernesstravel.com).

## REFERENCES

We'd be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us.

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At [www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com), you can book your trip online or find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and one-time Limited Edition adventures that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access our complete library of detailed itineraries filled with enticing photos and videos, read bios of our Trip Leaders, find descriptions of trip accommodations, and check real-time availability of any trips that interest you.





**WILDERNESS TRAVEL HAS BEEN AWARDED:**

**Best Travel Specialists in the World:** *Conde Nast Traveler*, 2024, 4-time winner

**World's Best Tour Operators:** *Travel + Leisure*, 11-time winner

**Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips:** *AFAR Magazine*, 3 years in a row

**Best Adventure Travel Companies:** *USA Today*

**Trip of the Year:** *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner

**50 Tours of a Lifetime:** *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

**Best Adventure Travel Companies:** *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel Catalog.

**Revised: October 31, 2024**



**Wilderness Travel**

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