



GUIA

SETE CIDADES

Tourist Guide



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Tourist Guide

SETE CIDADES

CRESAÇOR – Azores For All

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Dulce Pacheco, João Nunes, Maria Manuela Albergaria,
Manuela Soeiro, Paulo Garcia

REVISION

Manuela Soeiro, Michael Ross, Samanta Fontes

PHOTOS

Azoresphotos (Associação Turismo dos Açores), CRESAÇOR,
Direção Regional da Cultura, Eduardo Miranda,
Nuno Fonseca, Paulo Garcia, SIARAM

DESIGN

CRESAÇOR – Criações Periféricas
Elisabete Ross

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1 São Miguel island



São Miguel, the largest of the nine volcanic islands constituting the archipelago of the Azores, has an area of 745 km², a length of 62 km, minimum width of 8 km and a maximum of 15 km.

Like the other Azorean islands, the formation of São Miguel had several phases and volcanic eruptions which increased its area, a process that began about 4 million

years ago in the Northeast zone. It gained its present form in the last 50 thousand years with the union of the Sete Cidades volcano to the rest of the island.

At any time of year the occurrence of clouds and rain is frequent, which maintains the extensive green areas and contributes to the exuberance of vegetation and landscape.



– Pico do Carvão viewpoint

From June to October periods of sunshine are longer and temperatures are higher, guaranteeing a moderate climate in São Miguel throughout the year. Average temperatures are 16° C in spring, 21° C in summer, 18° C in autumn and 14° C in winter.

São Miguel contains 6 districts and 64 parishes where 137 699 inhabitants live, according to

the 2011 Census. The Sete Cidades complex has its highest points at Pico das Éguas (873 m) and Pico da Cruz (856 m).

2 Social and historical context



Sete Cidades is a parish of the municipality of Ponta Delgada with 793 inhabitants (2011). Its name evokes stories and legends linked to its two largest lakes, one blue and one green.

In the XVIII century J. J. A. Albuquerque Bettencourt (1762 - 1808), owner of a large portion of the western part of the island, promoted settlement in the valley by giving people land at low leases, with the first families settling in Cerrado das Freiras. The people of Sete Cidades remain hostage to this old system of property. 90% of the population does not own the ground below their houses, which still belongs to the current heirs of that former owner, as do the Casa Grande and Pitoresco Garden, created by António Borges (1812 - 1879) in the later XIX century.

– Mosteiros islets

The population of those times had a very hard life, with few plots of land for cultivation, high rainfall, constant flooding and difficult access. Living came mostly from agriculture and domestic animals, supplemented with charcoal production, doing laundry and selling moss and blackberries.

Until the middle of the XX century the washerwomen of Sete Cidades spent many hours in the lakes scrubbing and clapping the clothes in stone washers and spreading them to dry on the lakeshore. Every week they went on foot with the clothes on top of the donkeys to the “city” to deliver the laundry and return with a new load.

To produce charcoal, they collected firewood, which was placed in pits, fired and transformed into charcoal to be transported on donkeys and carts to the “city.”



– Sete Cidades parish

2 Social and historical context



– Sete Cidades parish

Throughout the 20th century many people emigrated, mainly to the U.S.A. and to Canada.

Traditionally, sheep and goat farming was the largest economic resource; today it is cattle raising.

The traditional diet consisted of yams, bread, pepper, eggs, fish, occasionally pork, beans and fresh cheese. Today food is very diverse; food goods come in large part from “the outside”. With the milk, fresh cheese is produced. In the backyards of

the houses domestic animals are raised and fruits and vegetables grown. Harvests and utensils are stored in the graneis and arribanas (a type of small barn).

At the beginning of the 20th century, in an area known as Seara, there was a black tea factory, Seara Tea. At the Experimental Center for Organic Agriculture, fruit trees, aromatic plants are grown, as well as India variety tea for the production of white tea.



– Donkey transportation

The population, mostly Catholic, is very devoted and committed to its rituals. Every year the local group of pilgrims performs the Lenten pilgrimage. Christmas and Easter are celebrated, among other festivities. The Holy Spirit festivity, with the Empires of Trindade, São João and São Pedro, involves the entire community and a complex organization of brotherhoods and stewards.

There is a community collection of firewood, community meals, cattle and carriage ornamentation,

decoration of 'Holy Spirit rooms', coroações, distribution of food and 'folia' musical performance, among other events.

The church of São Nicolau was built in 1857. The feast in honor of this patron saint takes place on the second Sunday of August.

The cemetery of Rosais dates back to 1858, the current cemetery having been created in 1978.

The philharmonic band 'Lyre of Sete Cidades' was formed in 1948, by the priest José

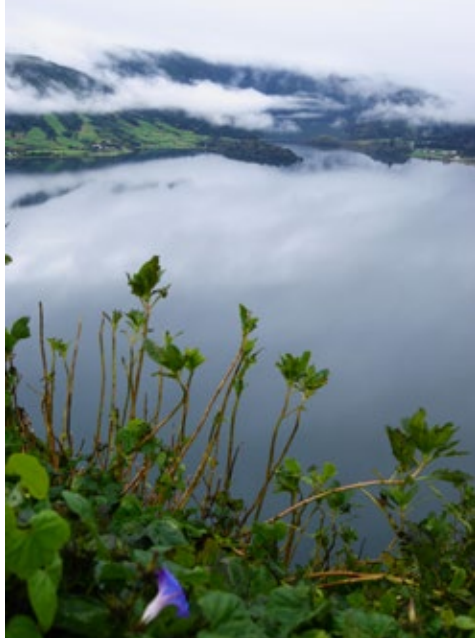
2 Social and historical context

Cabral Lindo (1879-1956)
and by maestro José Velho
Quintanilha (1897-1978).

The Public School was created in the late XIX century and in 1958 the school edifice “Plano dos Centenários” was built. The José Cabral Lindo School was expanded at the end of the 20th century and today this school building functions at pre-school and elementary education levels. Young people continue their studies until ninth grade in the EBI of Ginetes and secondary education in Ponta Delgada.

The first houses constructed in Sete Cidades were built of wood or stone masonry and roofed with straw.

In 1937, the drainage tunnel was completed, projected by the engineer Francisco Pacheco de Castro (1884-1980) and executed by Manuel de Oliveira Júnior (1884-1962). The tunnel is 1200 m long and resolved



the chronic problem of flooding caused by the rains.

In 1971 Sete Cidades was given the administrative status of a village and in 1981 electricity arrived. In 1982, through the initiative of Priest Eduardo da Costa Tavares (1928-1995), the “Casa do Povo” (House of the People) was built. There is little commercial economic activity: the Tavares Bakery opened in 1970, there is an establishment that sells “a bit of everything”, two small grocery stores, restaurants and bars.

The post office functions in the parish council office. At the “Casa do Povo” there is the health

care unit and a center for the elderly, among other services.

The Association '7 Maravilhas' organizes pedestrian hikes, among other events.

There is an eco-tourism store called **Azores For All—Eco-Atlântida** which, besides providing touristic information, runs a bicycle and canoe rental and sells products of economic solidarity origin.

Near the blue lake there is an informative and educational centre about the Sete Cidades Natural Park called Loja do Parque. The village now offers a significant number of tourist accommodations.

Sete Cidades is a Protected Area. Nowadays it receives many visitors, a recent phenomenon that will have economic and social consequences in the territory.



– Canário Lagoon

3 Morphology



– Ferrara

The most striking geomorphological feature of the western part of the island of São Miguel is the presence of a large collapse depression, at the top of the Sete Cidades massif, about 5 km in diameter, within which is located the village of the same name.

The village of Sete Cidades in fact occupies that great depression — called caldera

by volcanologists — though smaller depressions also exist in this area (such as the craters of Lagoa de Santiago, Lagoa Rasa, Caldeira do Alferes and Caldeira Seca), or on the flanks of the Sete Cidades volcano, namely on the volcanic cones of Pico das Camarinhas and the Lagoa do Pilar or Escalvado.

The predominant elements of the landscape of the caldera are the village of Sete Cidades and the vast water mass of the Lagoa Verde and Lagoa Azul (Green and Blue lakes). To the west of Lagoa Azul (Blue Lake) is the village with its usually isolated buildings, traditional architecture and typical rural annexes, such as *cafuões*, *granéis* and *arribanas*.

The Cumeeiras road — circling almost all of the volcanic depression and which affords a fantastic panoramic view — and the Peninsula are two other relevant morphological elements of Sete Cidades, the latter appearing as the tip of an arrow pointed north-northwest in the Blue lake.

However, the most relevant of all elements of the Sete Cidades landscape is undoubtedly the water mass of the Sete Cidades lake which, by legend and story, men have separated into two and baptized

as Lagoa Verde (Green Lake) and Lagoa Azul (Blue Lake).

At an altitude of about 259 m and with a maximum depth of 33 m, the Sete Cidades lake has a northwest-southeast length of 4,225 m, a maximum width of 2,030 m and occupies an area of about 4.35 km². The hydrological basin of Sete Cidades lake, with 19.3 km² covers almost all of the Sete Cidades volcano caldera, and includes intermittent streams such as those of the Grota do Inferno and the Vala das Sete Cidades.

Two other lakes inside the Sete Cidades caldera have distinct geomorphological frameworks. Lagoa de Santiago is deeply embedded in a northwest-southeast elongated crater (1,150 x 850 m in size), while Lagoa Rasa, as its name indicates (e.g. "shallow lake"), is little more than 4 m deep.



Eduardo H Photos

– Lagoa Azul

An important hydrological network can be found on the flanks of the Sete Cidades volcano, whose watercourses, usually short and sloping, run frequently as torrents and are thus named “grota” by the local population, a designation usually attributed to torrential streams (e.g. creeks).

The morphology of Sete Cidades volcano is also marked by the presence of the lava deltas of

Ponta da Ferraria and Mosteiros (locally called lava “fajãs”), eloquent testimonies of the victory of the “fire” element of Nature over the “water” element — in other words, the growth of the island of São Miguel was directly dependent on its volcanism and more specifically due to the emission, flow and conquest of the sea by lava flows emitted from the land.

4 Geology



– Mosteiros

The Sete Cidades volcano occupies the whole western part of São Miguel Island, stretching from the interior to the coast at Rocha da Relva and Ginetes, to Mosteiros, Bretanha and Capelas. Like the other major volcanoes of São Miguel (Fogo, Furnas and Povoação), the top of Sete Cidades volcano is truncated by a wide volcanic depression — the Sete Cidades caldera — where lies cozily nestled the village of Sete Cidades.

In the Sete Cidades volcano — which occupies an area of 110 km^2 and a volume of 40 km^3 — are rocks dated at about 210,000 years, but the oldest rocks of this central volcano will certainly be several hundred thousand years old, as this volcanic edifice rises from the surrounding seafloor at 2,700 m deep.

In the past, this volcanic edifice was separate from the rest of the



– Sete Cidades

island of São Miguel, existing between the two a sea channel, as is found today between the islands Faial and Pico.

This channel was progressively reduced and filled by the basaltic volcanism of the so-called “Picos Volcanic Complex”, significantly younger in age.

The Sete Cidades volcano caldera — an important geosite of the Azores UNESCO World Geopark — has a nearly circular outline with an

average diameter of 5.3 km and a depth of about 625 m.

The formation of this volcanic caldera, a process that began about 36,000 years ago, is associated with large and violent volcanic eruptions which in only a few hours or days were responsible for the emission of large quantities of volcanic materials (mainly pumice) and which, by emptying the deep-seated magma chamber of the Sete Cidades volcano, caused

the collapse of the top of the volcano and the formation of this huge volcanic depression.

The last eruption associated with the Sete Cidades volcano corresponds to the Sabrina Island eruption in 1811, which occurred at sea off the coast of Ponta da Ferraria and on the submerged southwest flanks of the central volcano.

Of this event there currently remains only a small seamount.

Given the predominantly explosive and siliceous nature of the volcanism that occurred after the formation of the Sete Cidades volcano caldera - that is, in approximately the last 16,000 years — the most frequent rock deposits in this area of São Miguel are pumice or of pumitic nature, contrasting with the scoria deposits (locally called “cascalho”, gravel or “bagacina” deposits) found in the Serra Devassa area.



– Lagoa Azul

4 Geology

The geology of the Sete Cidades volcano is also marked by the presence on its northwestern flanks of the so-called “Mosteiros graben”, that is, morpho-tectonic structures characterized by a collapsed sector of the volcano surface, between normal faults.

5 Flora and Fauna



– Common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)

Due to its morphological and soil-climatic characteristics and abundance of water, Sete Cidades represents an important biotope for many zoological and botanical species.

Although greatly changed in regard to the natural flora of the Azores due to the over-exploitation of natural forest resources for the use of wood as raw material and for the manufacture of charcoal; the transformation of the land into pasture; the extraction of peat moss used for hot

beds of pineapple greenhouses; and to the introduction of exotic species, whether for timber production, such as cryptomeria japonica, or for the ornamentation of roads and gardens, such as hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*), Azaleas (*Rhododendron indicum*) and Camellia Japonica, there remain in the Sete Cidades Protected Landscape area some individualized areas with original ecosystems, such as peat moss (*Sphagnum* sp.) in Grota do Inferno, the natural meadows



– Peat Moss (*Deschampia foliosam*)

of *Deschampia foliosa* and *Festuca* and the arborescent thickets of common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) in Serra Devassa.

Concerning the flora, special attention must be given to the great variety of mosses - about 250 different species — as well as their rarity, which gives them special status in terms of nature conservation. The endemic species *Lactuca watsoniana*; *Angelica* (*Angelica lignescens*); *Rumex azoricus*, *Euphorbia stygiana*, *Caerophyllum azoricum*; *Platanthera pollosthanta*, occur in small populations especially in the most rugged and difficult to reach areas, such as the Grota do Inferno.

Regarding aquatic flora those which stand out are, among others, the: *Egeria densa*, *Potamogeton lucens*, *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, *Litorella uniflora*, *Mentha aquatica*, *Elatine hexandra*, *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*.

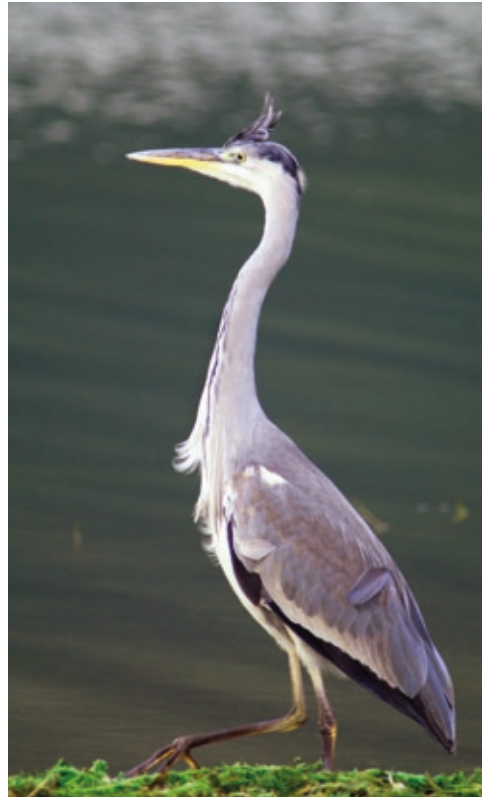
For avifauna, the lakes of Sete Ciades assume particular importance as a point of passage on the route of migratory birds, especially several species of herons: little egret (*Egretta garzetta*); grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*); and mallard ducks: *Aythya* (*Aythya collaris*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Common wig (*Ana penelope*), common pochard (*Aythya ferina*).



– Europea Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

The shores of Lagoa das Sete Cidades are also one of the few places in the archipelago where the common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus correiana*) reproduces and where there is a nesting ground of common terns (*Sterna-hirundo*) on an artificial island installed on the Blue Lake shore as part of a conservation project promoted by the Azores Regional Government through its Regional Environmental Department. The project aims to promote the reproduction of this species.

Among the resident avifauna there stands out the Azorean wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus azorica*), common blackbird (*Turdus merula azorensis*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)



– Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

5 Flora and Fauna

azoricus), Azorean grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea patriciae*) and the common buzzard (*Buteo buteo rothschildi*).

Innumerable species of fish have been introduced into the Lagoa das Sete Cidades, such as carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), pike (*Esox lucius*), perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*); cambarid freshwater crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) and the amphibian Iberian Pond Frog (*Rana perezi*).

Final mention should be made of the presence of the only mammal endemic to the Azores archipelago, the Azorean bat (*Nyctalus azoreum*).



6 Protected Landscape



– Lagoa Azul

The Sete Cidades Protected Landscape is located at the western end of the Island and comprises an area of 2173.43 ha, presenting an interesting diversity of landscape that reflects perfect harmony between natural values and human activities.

This protected area includes agricultural land, forest stands and also an urban area, the

village of Sete Cidades. Here, the Human-Environmental relationship assumes an extraordinary role and proper resource management is fundamental for maintaining the balance.

The wealth of water resources, the presence of protected flora and fauna and priority habitats, has led to this protected area being classified as a Ramsar site

6 Protected area

under the Wetlands Convention and integrated into the environmental biotope project CORINE.

Lagoa das Sete Cidades is classified as a protected water body through the Sete Cidades Lake Land Development and Watershed Plan (POBHLSC), with the objective to improve water quality and the preservation of natural resources, to make human uses and activities compatible with the environmental protection of the watershed.

On September 11th 2010, Lagoa das Sete Cidades was elected as one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal, in the Non-Marine Aquatic Zones category.

To know more about the natural values of this protected area and the São Miguel Natural Park visit the Loja do Parque das Sete Cidades.

7 Walking trails

Vista do Rei Sete Cidades

PR3 SMI



Difficulty: easy | Extention: 7 km | Time average: 2h00

This route begins at Vista do Rei viewpoint, given its name due to the presence of the King D. Carlos and the Queen D. Amelia, on the 6th of July 1901.

The trail is followed by way of an unpaved track that starts on the western side of Cumeeira da Caldeira das Sete Cidades (Caldeira's highest point). Along the trail you can see broad views of the interior of the caldera, the Green and Blue Lakes, the village of Sete Cidades, Caldeira Seca and Caldeira do Alferes (a cone of pumice holding in its interior a small lagoon). From the Lomba do

Vasco viewpoint you can see the north-northwest coast of São Miguel island, highlighting the villages of Ginetes, Várzea and Mosteiros, with its four islets.

When you reach the regional road that connects the village of the Sete Cidades to Várzea, take the path to the right and then turn left on an unpaved track. When you see the “Casa da Seara” (Seara House) there is a junction, where you will turn left again along the path of Arrebentões towards the center of the village of Sete Cidades, where the route ends.

Mata do Canário Sete Cidades PR4 SMI



Difficulty: easy | Extention: 12km | Time average: 3h00

The trail starts next to the “Muro das Nove Janelas”, a stone aqueduct with nine arcades that was built to supply water to the public fountains of the city of Ponta Delgada.

After passing through a forest of Japanese Cedars (*Cryptomeria japonica*) and a steep cemented rise, you will reach the top of Pico da Cruz, where you can see broad panoramic views of the north and south coasts of the island in the foreground, with the Serra de Água de Pau as a backdrop.

From this point the route follows the north crest of Lagoa Azul, where all along we can

appreciate magnificent views of the Lagoa das Sete Cidades and the Lagoa de Santiago. The Lomba do Vasco viewpoint offers a breathtaking view of the Sete Cidades caldera, where Lagoa Azul stands out in the foreground, in the background Lagoa Verde, on the west shore the village of Sete Cidades and to east the Peninsula and Cerrado das Freiras.

When you arrive at “Casa da Seara” (Seara House) there is a crossroad, where you should turn left along the Arrebetões road, towards the center of the parish of Sete Cidades, where the route ends.

Serra Devassa

PRC5 SMI



Difficulty: easy | Extention: 4,2 km | Time average: 2h00

This trail begins and ends next to the Recreational Forest of Lagoa do Canário, where the lake of the same name is located.

The route follows an unpaved track, which crosses the entire mountain range of Serra Devassa (a mountainous area that develops to the southeast of Sete Cidades caldera).

Along the climb to Pico das Éguas summit you can see a small volcanic cone with a lake inside, the Lagoa do Pau-Pique, which is flanked by the ruins of an old stone aqueduct known as the “Muro das Nove Janelas”.

The highest point of this route is the Pico das Éguas, with a height

of 873 m, from where you can see inside the crater the two Lagoas das Éguas, North and South.

Here there is a small viewpoint that offers an excellent view over Lagoa Rasa, in the foreground, with the small Caldeirão Pequeno Norte and Caldeirão Pequeno Sul lakes in the background.

The trail continues towards Lagoa Rasa, a small lake that aforesaid supplied water to the old alcohol factory in Santa Clara (1884-1905).

Surrounding the Lagoa Rasa you should continue on the path that goes around the Pico das Éguas, back again to the Lagoa do Canário.

8 What to do – outdoor activities

Outdoor activities are considered to be those practiced in a natural environment for the enjoyment of its environmental and cultural aspects, while maintaining concern for their impact on natural resources and local community.

With its natural beauty, the Protected Landscape of Sete Cidades is the perfect place for practicing outdoor activities. Among them we have:

Hiking

In chapter 7 of this guide you will find information regarding Sete Cidades classified walking trails. For more information on the Azores Network of Classified Walking Trails visit trails.visitazores.com.

Birdwatching

Sete Cidades is an important area for the observation of migratory species. The bridge that divides the blue and the green lakes is an excellent spot to observe, with the help of binoculars

or a telescope, ducks, coots or moorhens. Sete Cidades is also one of the few habitats of the archipelago where the Azorean moorhen reproduces. Lagoa de Santiago or Caldeira do Alferes are also other places highly sought after for bird watching.

Sport Fishing

In the waters of Sete Cidades there are several species of fish such as the common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), mirror carp (*Cyprinus specularis*), pike (*Esox lucius*), perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), redheaded fish (*Rutilus rutilus*) and trout (*Salmo iridens gibrans*). To practice sport fishing a license is required from the Regional Government. You can obtain the license from the Ponta Delgada Forestry Services.

Bike Tours

There are several trails around the Sete Cidades lakes. Baía do Silêncio, Canto dos Carneiros and the tunnel are excellent places to practice this activity.



– Walking trails

According to the route recommended in Sete Cidades map you have 16 km distance for cycling.

Canoe and Paddle Tours

Next to the environmental complex of Sete Cidades there are several tourist animation companies that rent canoes and paddle boards.



– Canoeing

8 What to do – outdoor activities

Horseback/Horse Buggy Riding

The area surrounding the Sete Cidades lakes (Baia do Silêncio and the peninsula) and the parish itself are very suitable for horseback riding, providing a pleasant experience.

Geocaching

There are many treasures (*caches*) hidden along the Sete Cidades village and surroundings. For more information visit www.geocaching.com.



– Bike tours

Viewpoints and other places of interest

To enjoy nature, whether on foot, by car, by jeep or by bicycle you can visit viewpoints such as: Vista do Rei, Cerrado das Freiras, Lagoa de Santiago, Lomba do Vasco and Grotta do Inferno. You can also enjoy, on foot, beautiful spots like the Lagoa das Empadadas, the aqueduct, the tunnel, the Regos Bridge, picnic areas;

the Fontenary, São Nicolau Church, the Bandstand, the Picturesque Garden, the old tea factory and the forest area of Mata da Casa.

For information on companies that carry out the various activities described above, please consult the official Azores tourism website: www.visitazores.com



– Joelette tours

9 Code of conduct

When visiting Sete Cidades, pay particular attention to a set of standards of conduct essential not only for your safety, but also for the conservation of the natural, cultural and historical heritage of these protected areas.

- Respect local people, ways of life and traditions;
- Avoid noise and attitudes that disturb the tranquility of the place;
- Keep at a distance from animals, do not feed them;
- Do not pick up plants or geological samples: leave them for other visitors to see;
- Do not throw trash on the ground: deposit it in the proper places or take it to a place where there is a collection service;
- Do not start a fire;
- Practice nature activities in authorized places and with all safety conditions;
- Whenever possible, be accompanied by accredited monitors;
- Do not forget that sometimes the same route may be used by visitors on foot, on horseback, on bicycle or in motor vehicles: we ask for mutual respect and common sense;
- The existing trails should be used by small groups at one time: an excessive number of visitors can cause damage and destruction of the natural elements;
- Respect private property, close gates if you pass them in the course of an activity;
- Picnics should be done at the picnic areas available in the areas to visit: please inquire about their location before starting your visit;
- Contact the competent authorities whenever you notice any irregularities or in the event of an accident or emergency.



– Sete Cidades

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CRESAÇOR POSTO DE TURISMO CULTURAL

Rua de Santa Bárbara, nº 18
9500-104 Ponta Delgada

(+351) 296 098 866

(+351) 919 538 214

turismoinclusivo@cresacor.pt

www.azoresforall.com
www.cresacor.pt