

Pico

Ships in sight, new tales on the tide!
Landscape and traces of the Portuguese India Route



An itinerary with this theme is available for six islands. Learn more about our history.



(PT) “Há por toda esta ilha em redondo muita e grossa madeira de cedro, sanguinho, ginja, pau branco, faias, louro e, sobre toda, a madeira de teixo [...] [...] da chamada ponta do Mouro ou de André Roiz, se carrega grande quantidade de madeira de toda a sorte, pera todas as outras ilhas em caravelas e barcos grandes [...]”

(EN) All around this island exists plenty and thick cedar wood, sanguinho, sour cherry, white wood, beeches, laurel and, above all, yew wood[...] [...] from the so-called Ponta do Mouro or from André Roiz, vast quantities of wood of all kinds are carried to other islands in caravels and vessels [...].

Gaspar Frutuoso (1586-1590).
Saudades da Terra, Livro VI

Explore PICO AZORES



Explore the same theme in other islands of the Azores

AZORES ARCHIPELAGO

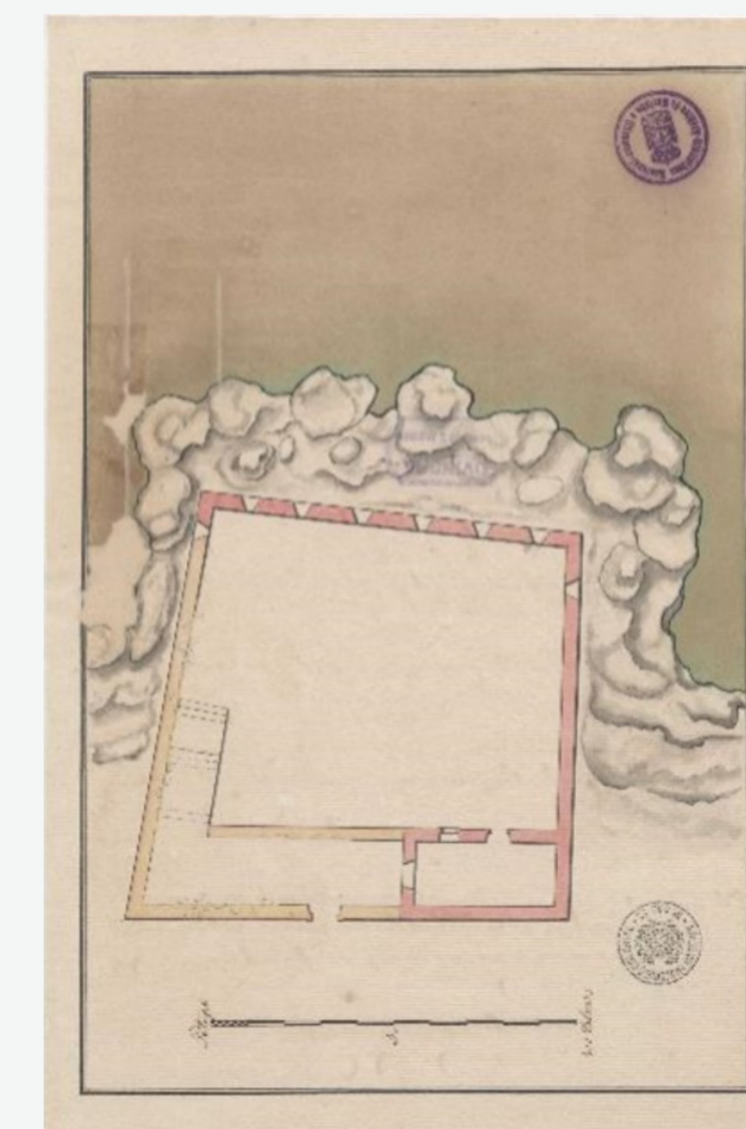
Forts of Pico

The protection of the three main towns on Pico was guaranteed by redoubts and watchtowers whose poor architectural quality led to their abandonment. Like many other places, some surviving structures were reclassified and converted into scenic viewpoints. Despite this, some have entirely disappeared, and only their memory remains preserved in the place's toponymy.

The forts or watchtowers were named based on the characteristics of the territory or the designation of nearby churches. As a result, some of the indicated locations are speculations based on these pieces of evidence and can be challenging for travellers to discover.

1. Fort of Prainha, Baía de Canas
2. Redoubt of Areia Funda
3. Redoubt of Areia Larga
4. Watchtower of Santa Catarina, later transformed into the Fort of Santa Catarina or Fort of Santo António, Lajes
5. Watchtower of Calhau

Forts with unknown locations:
Watchtower of Barra
Watchtower of Lagoa



Francisco Xavier Machado.
"Forte no Porto da vila das Lajes" ca.1769

Influences on Pico's Cuisine

The use of spices is common in Azorean gastronomy, which surpasses the use of herbs, typical from the mainland's cuisine. This custom dates back to when spices were abundant in the islands' ports, and each locality adapted their use to their taste.

Originally made with the blood and offal of lamb, kid, sheep or pig, sarapatel appears to have had a Jewish origin and, after being taken to the East by the Portuguese in the 1500s, spices (pepper, cloves and paprika) were incorporated and returned on ships from India with these new palates. In Pico, although now nearly a memory, people also made sarapatel. Adapting to local products, limpet sarapatel, seasoned with spices, was an appreciated speciality until a few decades ago.



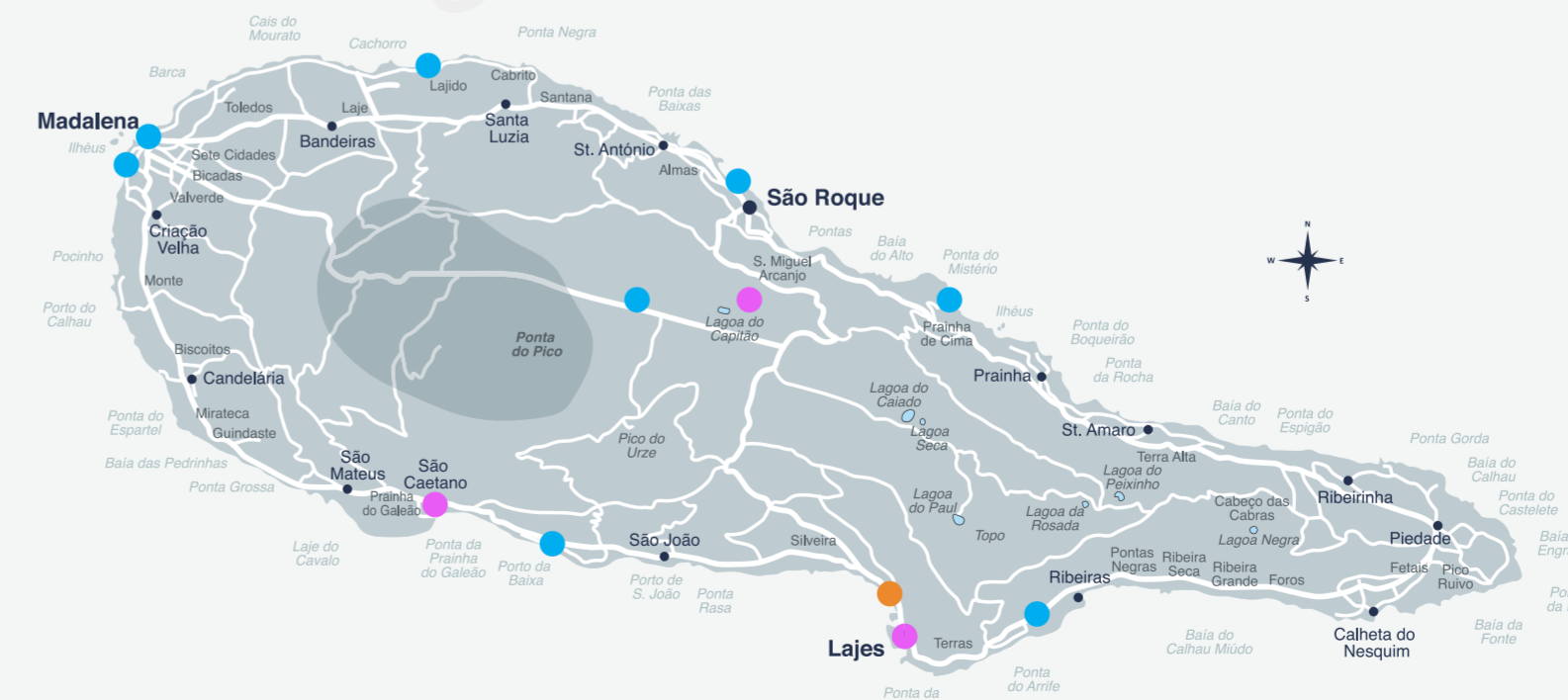
Thematic Routes

Among the countless possibilities for exploration routes on the island, we propose three thematic itineraries: in one, you will find, above all, places whose histories intersect with pirates and corsairs and where, for this reason, it was necessary to install means of surveillance and defence; in another, you will be taken to appreciate aspects related to the marks that the riches coming from the East between the 16th and 17th centuries left on Pico; Lastly, we invite you to discover aspects of intangible heritage through memories of the spices present in local gastronomy.

STORIES OF PIRATES
1-2-3-4-5-7-10-12-14

REVOLVING AROUND THE SILVER
9-11

FLAVOURS WITH SPICES
6-8-13



Ships in sight, new tales on the tide!

Landscape and traces of the Portuguese India Route

In the 16th and 17th centuries, because it was not a support stopover for the India Route, Pico was a weak target for privateer activity travelling to the Azores in the interest of transatlantic maritime trade. The late raising of fortifications resulted in initially very simple fortified watchtowers. Even so, in the *Regimento das Vigias* (1570) of the town of Lages, the rallying cries that should be used are described as: "Moors on the coast!", "Moors in land!" and "Residents to arms!"

It would be at the anchorages in the town of Madalena (surveillance points for vessels that, circulating in the channel between Pico and Faial, approach the wealthy town of Horta) and on the south coast (flatter and full of bays vulnerable to landings) that the main watchtowers and fortifications were installed. However, by the mid-19th century, they were all abandoned or almost destroyed.

Pico's contribution to maintaining the Atlantic trade routes during this period resulted from it being second-line support that supplied the central islands with essential goods for export and the supply of fleets.

Several docks were built in each locality to ship wood, firewood, and wine; these developments were favoured by the low, indented coast on the southern side of the island, where the primary location of the island, Lajes, is also located.

Less disturbed by privateer attacks than the other islands and never plundered or destroyed, on the island of Pico, you can see exciting examples of urban planning and built heritage that is a testament to the time when the India Run vessels sought the Azores in search of protection.

As you explore the island, we propose that you take a moment to appreciate some of the imprints that the few clashes and attacks left on the landscape, the defence points built as part of a strategic defensive vision, and the memories that the passage of spices and silver in the 16th and 17th centuries ingrained in the community.

Enjoy your walk!

1. Graciosa Pier, Areia Funda, Madalena

The Madalena Fort, a construction from the mid-18th century, was established where small defensive redoubts had previously existed. Its position was important as it dominated the stretch of coast facing Horta, exchanging fire with its fortifications. Today, nothing remains of these structures, but they were likely located near this small protective wharf in the Areia Funda area, known as Graciosa Pier.



2. Oxcart grooves, Lajido

The old routes, generally in stone or natural rock pavement, connected the villages to each other, but, more importantly, they established the connection between the productive areas of vineyards or other areas of cultivation and firewood collection, with the countless docks or small piers that the island's low coast provides and from where the cargo was loaded onto the vessels, as is the locality of Santo António. That evidence of this intense activity can be seen in the the grooves left in the ground by the wheels of cars, named 'relheiras'.



3. Marginal of Cais o Pico

The dwellings - whether those with a more popular character or a more elaborate appearance- have common characteristics typical of the agricultural context, such as having single-story stores and often being accompanied by buildings to support agriculture. The facades facing the São Roque pier present houses "built with rubble" with these characteristics of rusticity and archaism, although belonging to wealthier owners.



4. Fort of Prainha, Baía de Canas, Prainha

Encircling through the north side, the coast appears steeper and less suitable for landing; therefore, there is less need for protection. Even so, the Fort of Prainha dominated Baía das Canas and its small anchorage. Today, there is nothing left of it.



5. Lagoa do Cavaleiro (Knight's Lagoon), Estrada Nacional 3

Lagoa do Cavaleiro is one of several lagoons in Pico located close to Lagoa do Capitão, and its name is also curious because it takes us back to a distant time in which knights were fundamental characters in the defence of the localities.



6. Lagoa do Capitão (Captain's Lagoon), Estrada Nacional 3

The small Lagoa do Capitão, at the eastern foot of Pico's cone, is probably what the historian Gaspar Frutuoso, in the 16th century, called the Alagoa of Rodrigues. This designation referred to the name of the land owner, an important figure in the exploration of the place, while remembering his role in organising the territory and, certainly, in its defence.



14. Areia Larga Pier, Madalena

The Areia Larga Pier was a port alternative to the Madalena Pier, especially used by local vessels. The Madalena Fort and the earlier small defensive redoubts that preceded it are believed to have been situated in this low coastal area between the two ports.



13. Prainha do Galeão, São Caetano

Gaspar Frutuoso called this place Calhau do Galeão and explained that, in that place, Garcia Gonçalves Madruga built a large galleon that he named Trindade and that he handed it over to King Dom João III in payment of certain debts. Galleons were transport ships widely used on the Indian Route and, therefore, well armed with artillery pieces, which, undoubtedly, the people of Pico would see when they looked for the bay of Angra and its safe port.



12. Ponta do Mouro, São João

Some toponymic designations allude to aspects that we can easily associate with an imaginary of fights and defence actions that may have occurred during the period when ships and galleons were pursued by pirates and privateers in the seas of the Azores. This is the case with Ponta do Mouro, which historian Gaspar Frutuoso says is also known as Ponta de André Roiz but which local memory remembers as having been where a shipwrecked or escaped Moor arrived on the island and never left. Today, it is a bathing area known as Ponta do Admiro.



11. Fort of Santa Catarina, Lajes

Several watch posts were set up in the extensive Bay of Lajes. The transformation of the Santa Catarina watchtower into a fortification dates back to the 18th century, when a wall on the landward side, platforms, bartizans, and facilities for soldiers and oars were added. Its consolidation occurred in a particular context of insecurity caused by the War of Spanish Succession, and its name alternated between "Fort of Santa Catarina" and "Santo António". In 1978, it was classified as a Property of Public Interest, and in 2006, it was restored by the Lajes Municipal Council to accommodate a leisure area, garden, viewpoint, and performance area.



10. Passo, Vila das Lajes

A Procissão dos Passos (the Procession of Steps), a tradition implemented in Portugal by the Franciscans throughout the 16th century. It replicates Jesus' path to Calvary, passing through stations where tales of this journey are told. Close to the Franciscan Convent of Lajes, this "Passo", together with others that still exist, was part of the Via Sacra (Way of the Cross) of the first village of Pico.



9. Vila das Lajes

Vila das Lajes was the initial and primary urban nucleus of the island, with its houses forming a harmonious ensemble developed on a main street that runs parallel to the sea - Rua do Capitão-Mor Gonçalves Madruga (Capitão-Mor Gonçalves Madruga Street) - complemented by the Franciscan convent building founded in the mid-17th century.



8. Chapel of São Pedro, Lajes

After the settlement of Pico began in the kind of cut-out, low-lying fajã on the south coast of the island, which is today the village of Lajes, the chapel of São Pedro was the first temple built dedicated to Saint Peter there (1460), in honour of the first parish priest, Frei Pedro Gigante. The chapel leans against other houses whose construction period appears to be contemporary and faces the sea, peering into it and protecting those in the immediate vicinity.

