

Over five centuries the Azorean character was strongly framed by the rugged elements of the islands nature, inspiring numerous rituals and religious traditions. A great part of the History and Culture of these islands is displayed through the legacy of their beliefs and religious traditions, as well as their architectural and artistic heritage.

In the Azores there are many religious celebrations, evoking people and special events. Some of these demonstrations only take place in the Azores; others were taken by the Azoreans to the four corners of the world, underlining their bond to religions penitent and/or festive trends.

Religious celebrations are a year round attraction in the Azores, the most important taking place from April to September.

Other religious events and festivities

Santa Maria Island, Vila do Porto

• August 15: N.ª Sr.ª da Assunção. The music festival Maré de Agosto is associated with these festivities and it includes many musical and literary events.

São Miguel Island, Vila Franca do Campo

• The Sunday closest to May 8: São Miguel, The Archangel. This ceremony was brought by the first settlers and celebrates both the island's patron saint and the patron saints of professional occupations.

Terceira Island, Agualva

• August 15: N.ª Sr.ª da Guadalupe. This parish is known for its various fountains

of crystal clear water, as well as for its orchards. On this day, it hosts many pilgrims in search of protection.

Graciosa Island, Santa Cruz

• May 24: N.ª Sr.ª da Guadalupe. This is one of the island's largest processions. The procession of repentance to *Monte da Ajuda* results from a popular piety vow dating back to the 18th century.

São Jorge Island, Fajã dos Vimes

• July 16: N.ª Sr.ª do Carmo. Traditional pilgrimage to one of the largest fajãs on the island's southern coast.

Pico Island, Lajes

• Last Sunday of August: N.ª Sr.ª de Lurdes, whalers patron saint. The festivities last for a week. There are many social, cultural and sport activities linked to the extinct whale hunting activity.

Faial Island, Horta

• Sixth Sunday after Easter: N.ª Sr.ª das Angústias. One of the largest festivities on the island, gathering believers from several islands.

Flores Island, Fajãzinha

• First Sunday of September: Santo Amaro. Ancient devotion in this parish, being one of the island's most important pilgrimages.

Corvo Island, Vila Nova do Corvo

• August 15: N.ª Sr.ª dos Milagres. The celebrations in honour of this patron saint are the largest on the island. Associated with *Festival dos Moinhos*.



Santa Maria Island - Santo Espírito

• N.ª Sr.ª da Purificação Church (18th century) - Baroque with a lava stone-decorated façade.

São Miguel Island - Ponta Delgada

• São José Church (17th century) - It was part of the extinct Convent of Saint Francis, falling within the Portuguese Style *Maneirista*.

Terceira Island - Angra do Heroísmo

• Santíssimo Salvador da Sé Church (16th century) - One and only cathedral in the Azores and the largest temple in the

archipelago. This is where the Diocese of Angra is located.

São Jorge Island - Manadas

• Santa Bárbara Church (18th century) - Baroque style, its interior is a portfolio of religious art from that time.

Flores Island - Santa Cruz

• N.ª Sr.ª da Conceição Church (19th century) - Designated as Building with Public Interest, this is one of the most imposing churches in the Azores.

Graciosa Island - Santa Cruz

• N.ª Sr.ª da Ajuda Hermitage (15th century) - One of the best examples of fortified churches existing in the Azores.

Faial Island - Horta

• São Salvador Church (17th century) - Adjacent to the extinct Jesuit Convent, it houses a great heritage in its interior.

Pico Island - São Mateus

• São Mateus Church (19th century) - Considered a Diocesan Sanctuary, in its interior there is an image of Senhor Bom Jesus Milagroso brought from Brazil.

Corvo Island - Vila Nova do Corvo

• N.ª Sr.ª dos Milagres Church (18th century) - Mother Church whose architecture and dimension stand out from the town's remaining buildings.

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FIVE CENTURIES
OF RELIGIOUS TRADITION

36° 55' 44" N, 25° 01' 02" W - Azores, PORTUGAL

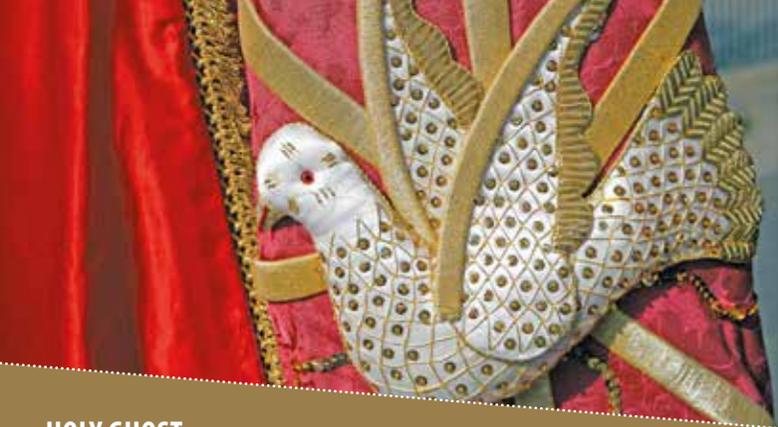


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HOLY GHOST



The devotion to the third person of the Holy Trinity is one of the oldest and most disseminated practices of Christianity. The worship of the Holy Ghost was brought

to the Azores by the first settlers, influenced by the Franciscans, first religious order to settle the islands, and the severe life conditions they encountered strengthening Azorean belief over the years building it up into a present day world bastion of the faith on The Third Person of the Trinity. Festivities in honour of the Holy Ghost take place on every Island of the archipelago, although some rituals may differ from island to island. This cult is based on a brotherhood that celebrates the values of equality, fraternity and liberty as the motto, not of a revolution, but of the ordered government of God. The festivities' most important rituals are the "crowning" of the imperador and the offering of food and drinks to the community and passers-by, combining veneration with joyful get-togethers. The Impérios, small colourful structures of a unique architecture, brighten all Azorean parishes. They are the core of the Holy Ghost worship and rituals, housing the insignias, the crown and sceptre the flag and banner.

Those who visit the Azores during these celebrations can savour the famous "Holy Ghost Soups" that consist of vegetable and meat stock poured over wheat bread, flavoured with mint. Sweet bread (massa sovada), rice pudding and local red wine (vinho de cheiro) are also served. Being a large family and community tradition, everyone is invited to partake in this celebration.

Date and place: On every island the preparation begins after Easter and ends with the celebration itself between Whit Sunday and Holy Trinity Sunday, although the feasts may take place in other periods over the islands.

PILGRIMS OF SÃO MIGUEL ISLAND (ROMEIROS)

The origin of these pilgrimages dates back to the seismic crisis that affected São Miguel Island in the XVI century, during which people decided to organise pilgrimages in order to seek divine protection against those events and obtain forgiveness for their own and everyone else's sins.



Since then, every year groups of men, called romeiros, bond in pilgrimage during a week around the island. These pilgrims stop at churches and hermitages devoted to the Virgin. They sing rounds of hail marys, slightly muddled and off-key, like a fisherman's monastic chant. The Romeiros' attire is very symbolic and follows the rules and customs set by the group structure and the ritual itself. Currently, these pilgrimages gather every year around two thousand pilgrims, who pray repentantly and intensively while visiting around 100 places of worship.

Date and place: On the Island of São Miguel each group of pilgrims comes out during one of the weeks of Lent, previously defined by Central Coordination, with the first groups leaving on the week-end after Ash Wednesday and the last groups returning to their home parishes on Holy Thursday.



SENHOR SANTO CRISTO DOS MILAGRES



The celebrations in honour of Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres constitute one of the largest religious festivities in Portugal and the largest in the Azores, bringing together thousands of believers, not only from the Azores.

The festivities' peak takes place on the fifth Sunday after Easter with the procession of the image of Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres through the streets of Ponta Delgada, covered with flower carpets. This procession takes place since the 17th century, when the image was taken out in a procession intended to stop seismic crises affecting São Miguel Island at the time.

According to popular belief, the image of Ecce Homo was offered by the Pope Paul III to the Sisters of Saint Clare of the island's first convent, in Caloura, in the 16th century. As this place was vulnerable to pirate and corsairs attacks, these nuns moved to the convent of Our Lady of Hope, in Ponta Delgada, taking with them the image that remains there up to present date.

The treasure associated with the image is the richest in the Iberian Peninsula. It is partially composed of donations from grateful devotees who saw their prayers answered.

Apart from the religious aspect, characterised by moving the image to the main altar within the chapel of Our Lady of Hope and the neighbouring church of Saint Joseph, the candle procession, the evening vigil and the grand procession, there is a secular dimension to the festivities, including concerts, fairs and a variety of food and drink stands.

Date and place: Ponta Delgada, São Miguel Island, on the fifth Sunday after Easter (see www.santo-cristo.com).

The same saint is evoked by similar images on other Azorean islands, also being intensely celebrated with processions and small festivities, namely on Graciosa Island, in Santa Cruz, and on São Jorge Island, in Fajã de Santo Cristo. These events take place on the second Sunday of August and on the first Sunday of September respectively.

There is, at least, one church or hermitage in every Azorean parish or town, where several religious events occur in honour of their patron saints.

OUR LADY OF MIRACLES

There is an all-embracing devotion to the Virgin Mary in the Azores. In fact, there are processions and pilgrimages in her honour in almost every little town of the Azorean islands.

Emerging in different forms, the worship of Our Lady of Miracles is one of the most significant in the Azores.

On Terceira Island, in Serreta, the Diocesan Sanctuary of Our Lady of Miracles is the largest and most important Marian centre of the Azores, gathering thousands of pilgrims in a tradition that dates back to the end of the 16th century.

According to popular belief, a priest, who got tired of men's lack of moral, decided to become a hermit. To accomplish one of his vows, he built a hermitage where he placed an image of Our Lady of Miracles, which he had taken with him.

The aura of holiness that, since then, surrounds the image brings every year, on the second Sunday of September, a multitude of believers to the church of Serreta, being the island's largest pilgrimage.

Date and place: Our Lady of Miracles takes place at the Parish of Serreta on the Island of Terceira annually on the second week-end of September. The pilgrimage takes place on Friday and Saturday before the festive Sunday and ends on Monday.

