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WORLDWIDE PARAGLIDING AND PARAMOTORING MAGAZINE. FOR FREE.



# DANCING ON VOLCANOES

THE AZORES: PORTFOLIO AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION



If you've got a mini wing don't leave it at home, often the wind can be very strong in the Azores.

**Text and photos: K.Martin**

**H**ave you ever nearly cried after a flight? I have here in the Azores, on the Island of Sao Miguel. Surfing in the confluence on the crest of the Sete Cidades crater, fed by a thermic breeze on the inside and a sea breeze on the outside, is an unmistakable experience, mind-blowing, mad.

This lookout point on the island is rarely flyable, because the high relief is often shrouded in cloud. But when the conditions are good (W-NW, meteo wind 10-15km/h max), it is the most beautiful free flying arena that you can imagine. Thanks to the thermic bullets which come up from time to time, it is possible to gain enough height to get away on an XC, and to either cross the island from west to east, or do a tour of the crater and its splendid lake. All the same, keep an eye on the conditions which are not always that relaxed. The sea air is very unstable, the aerology on the island sometimes causes unusual shear layers and a layer of cloud can quickly close in... Below you.

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Other sites which work in different directions are scattered across Sao Miguel, the main island in the Azores, giving a complete change of scenery and stunning flying above breathtaking countryside. It is essential to get in touch with the local pilots to be in the right place at the right time; they're wonderful, excellent XC pilots and full of fun. Coming to the Azores only to fly would also be a mistake, because the weather conditions are too random.

On the other hand, it's an exceptional destination for the whole family thanks to its climate and the numerous opportunities for swimming in hot or cold water, surfing, diving, walking... So if in addition you can round off your visit with a flight at Sete Citades, don't be surprised if tears of gratitude fill your eyes when you land; everything is so beautiful here!



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Sete Citades is THE spot on the Island of Sao Miguel to dance on a volcano. Unforgettable.



Another take off: orientation W-SW (N 37°52'15.89 - W 25°45'48.81), altitude 560 metres, height difference 300 metres: rather sporty, with a steep, little, windy slope followed by a vertical cliff several hundred metres high. Staying high is possible... for good pilots.

Other take offs are possible around the crater; ask the locals for advice. An alternative easier site in W-NW conditions (N 37°50'59.10 - W 25°45'37.18), altitude 760 m, height difference 500m. Land on the edge of the lake, wherever you want, avoiding the crops. The locals will show you the landing field for the day.



The Serra Gorda site, with a view of the capital, Ponta Delgada. The airport is behind the hill!



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### FLYING FESTIVAL

Every year, for nearly 20 years, a paragliding festival has been organised in mid August on the island. There are famous pilots present from all over the world, doing displays, cheap tandem flights, conferences, parties... it's fantastic! With a hundred paragliders flying all over the Island of Sao Miguel trying to find the best spot for the day, it's very well organised, very cool, very warm. This years festival will take place from the 20th to the 24th of August. You can register on the club's website or on their Facebook page.

### PARAGLIDING SCHOOL

It isn't really very structured but Paolo Luis is an instructor: [pluisrego@gmail.com](mailto:pluisrego@gmail.com)  
Some schools from other countries have now started to offer trips to the Azores.

### THE LOCAL CLUB

A group of amazing pilots who are happy to help visitors. We seriously like them! Before your trip, get in touch with the club if you would like their contact details. Let them know you have arrived by SMS on your first day, and you'll be in the loop to be notified when and where it is flyable. Don't forget that these people work...

Club site: [www.asassaomiguel.com](http://www.asassaomiguel.com)

Tourist office site: [www.visitazores.com](http://www.visitazores.com)

Weather forecast site: [www.windguru.cz](http://www.windguru.cz) Its weather forecasting for Sao Miguel alone is amazing.



**OTHER SITES**

At least a dozen sites are listed but you can fly anywhere, as long as you respect the fields and the livestock. The Fournas site (SE-S-SW) gives fantastic thermal flying. Serra Gordo (five minutes from the capital) doesn't look up to much but offers a good choice of flying possibilities in a north easterly. The local pilots often fly here in the evening after work. Be careful all the same; the aerology is complex as is always the case on an island. You can soon find yourself in the lee of something.

Following the locals is your best bet. A free site guide is available from the tourist information office in Ponta Delgada. Some say it is flyable all year round, but July and August are without a doubt the best months: 25° during the day, 20° at night - fantastic.

A local proverb says that, here, we have all four seasons in one day. So if you wake up and the sky is overcast, don't panic, two hours later you could perhaps be admiring a Texan sky! There is a lot of rain between October and May, but the temperature is rarely below 13° ■

Several great little cliffs are here to tempt you with a bit of spicy soaring in the breeze (photo below taken at Santa Barbara).



**NEW** SD series





The Island of Sao Miguel is a top family destination so don't hesitate to bring the kids!

A small, almost city site, Populo needs strong wind and a lot of skill.



# PORTFOLIO THE AZORES

THOMAS ULRICH





A bit of ground handling and soaring on the beach at Sao Roque.





The volcanic craters are omnipresent in the Azores.

Gentle evening conditions near Ginetes.





Perfect aerology: A nice high cloud base above the Lagoa do Fogo.





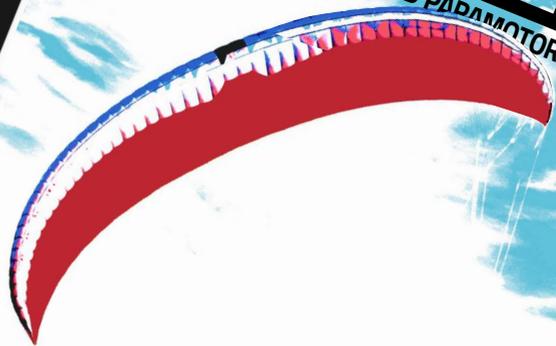
Final glide into the setting sun near Lagoa.



In the Azores, the greenery borders the rocky landscape.

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