

Faial

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



Explore the same theme in other islands of the Azores

AZORES ARCHIPELAGO



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

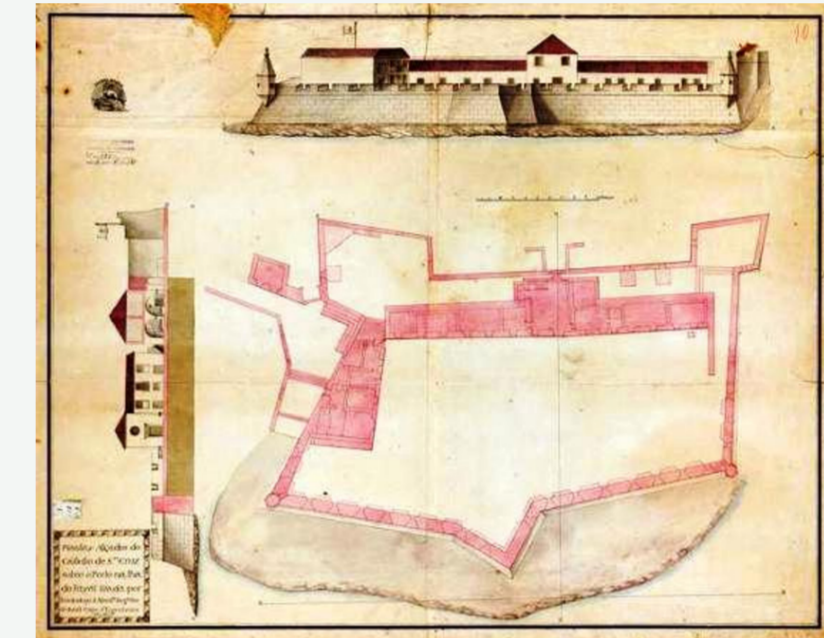


Forts of Faial

In 1567, during the regency of the Cardinal Dom Henrique, the fortification of Faial was decisively boosted when the Italian military architect Tommaso Benedetto designed the island's defensive plan. However, it was from 1570 to 1583 that this was particularly encouraged, with the purpose of defending Faial from potential Spanish invasions. While we can still find remnants of some forts scattered across the landscape, nothing remains from others, and even identifying their location can sometimes be challenging. The forts 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. Bombardeira of Porto Pim and Porto Pim Gate or Patrol Redoubt, Baía de Porto Pim
2. Fort of Ponta Furada, Feteira
3. Fort of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, later Fort of Alagoa, Baía da Horta
4. Fort or Castle of Guia / Fort of Greta, Monte da Guia
5. Fort of Santa Barbara, or Fort of Carrasca, Horta
6. Fort or Castle of Santa Cruz, or Castle of Santo António, Baía da Horta
7. Fort, Castle, or Fortlet of Bom Jesus, or Castelo / Forte Novo, Baía da Horta
8. Fort or Castle of São Sebastião, Baía de Porto Pim
9. Fort or Redoubt of Castelo Branco, Castelo Branco
10. Fort of São Pedro, Castelo Branco
11. Fort of Boa Viagem, Baía da Horta

Forts with unknown locations:
Fort of Feteira, later Redoubt of Feteira
Fort of Nossa Senhora do Rosário
Fort of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios, Praia do Almojarife
Fort of Senhor Santo Cristo, Praia do Almojarife



“Planta e alçados do castelo de Santa Cruz sobre o porto na ilha do Faial” 1805

Influences on Faial's Cuisine

Azorean cuisine generally stands out for the use and abundance of spices, in contrast to the typical cuisine from the mainland, which primarily relies on herbs for seasoning.

One of the specialities you can try in Faial is *Molha*, a kind of meat stew whose taste is enhanced with various spices, seasoned with pepper, cumin, and cinnamon.

Like on other islands, cinnamon is also a key ingredient in decorating the traditional rice pudding served during the Holy Spirit Festivities.



Explore FAIAL AZORES



(PT) “[...] à banda de oeste, se faz uma grande enseada, que se chama Porto Pim, onde antigamente foi ter uma nau da Índia, que se descarregou e carregou, por ser bom porto, o melhor que há nas ilhas, senão com o tempo sudoeste, que o lava todo, porque, então, é muito perigoso e se perdem muitas naus e navios, se estão dentro, só com este vento; mas com todos os mais estão seguros nele, e este é o porto principal da vila da Horta, que está junto dela [...]”

(EN) Westward lies a large cove called Porto Pim, where a ship from India arrived, unloaded and loaded, because it was a fine port, the finest on the islands, except with the southwest wind, which washes it all away, as it is perilous and many ships and vessels are lost if they find themselves inside, with this wind; with all other winds, however, they are secure in it, and this is the main port of the town of Horta, nearby.

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



Thematic Routes

Among the innumerable routes on the island, we propose three thematic itineraries: In one, you will be taken to places whose histories came across pirates and privateers. In another, you will uncover places where surveillance and defence mechanisms were established. In the last, you will be guided to the traces left by the riches brought from the East between the 16th and 17th centuries.

- STORIES OF PIRATES**
1-3-6-7-8-9-10
- REVOLVING AROUND SILVER**
1-2-4

- WATCHTOWERS AND FORTIFICATIONS**
3-5-7-8-11-12-13-14



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Landscape and traces of the Portuguese India Route

The port of Horta – initially in Porto Pim Bay and later in Horta Bay – has natural features that make it an excellent shelter, adding to the fact that it is located in a convergence point of routes crossing the Atlantic. At first, the port gained prominence through the export of woad produced on the island. Later, with the decline of the Cape Route and the reduced importance of the port of Angra, Horta became a favoured stop for vessels coming from the Americas.

The settlement of foreigners, lured by the emerging business opportunities, also contributed to the development of cosmopolitan experiences. However, the allure that the island acquired also attracted pirates and privateers who systematically plagued this region.

Efforts for fortification and defence of Faial were encouraged from the 1560s and 1570s when the military architect Tommaso Benedetto visited the island, coinciding with the increased corsair activity in the Azores. However, these measures could not prevent invasions, raids, and plundering that destroyed much of Faial's heritage.

We propose that you take a moment to appreciate some of the imprints and remnants that shed light on everyday life from the 16th and 17th centuries: the passage of spices and silver through Faial and the prosperity they brought. As the saying goes, there was always a ship on the tide carrying news, although not always the good kind!

Enjoy your walk!

1. The Crown of the Império dos Cedros, Cedros

Oral tradition has preserved a fascinating tale that could date back to the period when ships and galleons were chased by pirates and privateers in the Azorean seas. It is said that a group of Moorish pirates attacked Faial, and during their escape, their king lost his crown. Despite returning to search for it, they never found it because a girl hid it by tucking it on her leg. To retrieve the item, the locals had to saw the crown. However, the precious object remains in the temple, Império dos Cedros, where it became part of the Holy Spirit Festivities.



2. Senhor Santo Cristo of the Church of Praia do Almojarife, Praia do Almojarife

The statue of Senhor Santo Cristo of Praia do Almojarife was found on the beach, washed ashore by the sea, and it seems that it never wanted to leave that place. The legends surrounding images found in such a manner shed light on many of the tragedies that took place at sea when storms or pirate raids caused valuable cargo transported by ships to be lost.

3. Fort of Bom Jesus, Baía da Horta

The Fort of Bom Jesus, also known as Castle or Fortlet of Bom Jesus and later as Forte Novo, was likely erected around 1621 to crossfire with nearby forts. Nothing remains of the Fort of Bom Jesus as its location is now occupied by the Court of Horta and the new dock facilities in front of it.



4. Silver in the Museum of Sacred Art, Horta

The island was invaded and pillaged several times, causing the wealth that the private individuals and churches of Faial possessed to be progressively diminished. However, in the Church of the Convent of Carmo, now the Museum of Sacred Art in Horta, it is still possible to admire many silver pieces contemporary to the voyages of the India Run.



5. Fort of Santa Cruz, Baía da Horta

Designed by Tomasso Benedetto in 1567, the Fort of Santa Cruz stood as the only defensive structure with notable architectural significance in Horta Bay at the end of the 16th century. Nevertheless, its action was limited. It was only later, with the erection of the Fort of Alagoa and its connective wall, followed by the construction of the Forte Novo or Castelo Novo, with which it crossed fire, that it gained more effective defensive capability. The combined action of all these structures repelled and prevented English privateers from seizing a ship from Cape Verde that was anchored there in 1587.



6. Horta Bay

Horta Bay was stage for violent attacks by pirates and privateers, who, besides capturing anchored ships, also invaded and pillaged Horta. Two episodes occurred in 1589 and 1597, ordered by two English privateers: The first was George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, and the second was Walter Raleigh, who, under the command of Robert Devereux, the 2nd Earl of Essex, not only pillaged Horta but also ordered the churches in town and the surrounding ones to be set ablaze.



7. Fort of Nossa Senhora da Guia or Fort of Greta, Monte da Guia

Erected on the cliff of Monte da Guia, in a dominant position overlooking Horta Bay and on the east coast of Monte da Guia, the Fort of Greta was built in 1666. Its artillery crossfired with the watchtower of Areia Larga on Pico Island to block the passage of enemy vessels through the channel separating the two islands and secured access to the prosperous town of Horta.



8. Wall of Guia, Monte da Guia

Monte da Guia, a hilly isthmus enclosing Porto Pim Bay, also serves as a natural watchtower overlooking Horta Bay, which is why its fortification proved to have a double purpose. The wall that follows along the road leading to the mountaintop likely had a defensive purpose, featuring a direct link to the Redoubt of Guia, where it ends, and features openings resembling gun ports.



14. Fort of Ponta Furada, Feteira

The location of the Fort of Ponta Furada on the southern coast of the island, in the parish of Feteira, testifies that there was a need to monitor any vessels attempting to approach Horta. Nothing remains of this fort today, but a viewpoint can be found in its place.



13. Fort of Castelo Branco, Castelo Branco

As the small port of the parish of Castelo Branco on the southern coast of the island was a suitable location for landings, a fortification was built in the vicinity – the Fort of Castelo Branco – which monitored the approach of vessels along with the Fort of Ponta Furada.



12. Porto Pim Bartizan, Baía de Porto Pim

Porto Pim Bay, where the original port of Horta was located, has been fortified with defensive installations since the 17th century, which crossfired with each other to prevent the approach of enemy vessels. Right at the entrance, to the west of the bay, stood the Porto Pim Bartizan, a structure that can still be admired today.



11. Porto Pim Gate, Baía de Porto Pim

Located at the most protected point inside Porto Pim Bay, the Porto Pim Gate also known as “Reduto da Patrulha” was nestled in the wall and guarded by a bartizan. The Sea Gate was the actual entrance to the early settlement, and its security was further reinforced by a stretch of wall which connected it to the Fort of São Sebastião.



10. Fort of São Sebastião, Baía de Porto Pim

The ship “Nossa Senhora da Luz,” which departed from Goa in February 1615, shipwrecked near Porto Pim Bay, where it intended to seek shelter and restock its supplies when it arrived in November of the same year. It is estimated that approximately 150 people died. Given the importance and value of its cargo, the Crown organised a massive operation to retrieve it. Until the mid-19th century, the fort was known as “Castelo da Cruz dos Mortos” (Castle of the Cross of the Dead), as there stood a cross which defined the area for the priests of the Main Church to retrieve the bodies of the shipwreck victims.



9. The Pirate of Flamengos, Flamengos

It was fairly common for islanders, sailors, or travellers to be taken captive by pirate and privateer vessels. This is what happened to a resident of the parish of Flamengos, born there in 1656, who, after many years of captivity, would become the dreaded pirate Mustafá Gancho.

