

MANTA
EXPEDITIONS

AZORES

21 - 28
July 2024
(7 nights)

3,850 USD*
per person

© Nuno Sa

THE EXPEDITION

Every year, [dozens of sicklefin devil rays](#) and manta rays gather in the Azorean Sea, near the island of Santa Maria. Where do they come from? Where do they go? Do the same individuals return every year? These are some of the questions that arise from the curiosity of scientists and all those who are passionate about these mysterious animals. For one week, you will be able to swim in the fantastic underwater world of the Azores, [join the team leading the Manta Catalog Azores conservation project](#), discover more about the devil rays, learn about techniques of photo-identification and contribute to the protection of these threatened species.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- o Swim in the amazing underwater world of the Azores and learn more about the sicklefin devil rays and manta rays that gather near the Island of Santa Maria.
- o Experience an 8-day programme to discover the [best diving spots](#) and explore the unique beauty of Santa Maria Island.
- o Learn and get [hands-on experience in conservation](#) guided by researcher Ana Sobral, the Manta Catalog Azores project leader.
- o Learn Photo-ID techniques and upload your work on the Manta Catalog Azores database, contributing to the wider knowledge of these species and ultimately to their conservation globally.
- o Discover some of the most [authentic and iconic spots](#) of the Santa Maria with a trip around the island.
- o Experience [genuine local culture](#) - and authentic local food.
- o Be a part of an [exclusive experience](#) (maximum of 6 participants).
- o Join local communities in the [protection of nature](#), raising awareness not only for these threatened species but also for the urgency to ensure a sustainable future for these ecosystems.

DIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- o Considered one of the European top diving destinations, the Azorean Sea has an extremely [diverse and rich marine life](#). Dive with the manta rays in Azorean waters; you may meet with sharks, whales, and dolphins.
- o Two dives per day in the Atlantic Ocean: a daily dive at the Ambrosio seamount with a second dive in a variety of spots in Natural Reserves and Marine Protected Areas such as the islets of Formigas.
- o Crystal-clear waters (up to 40 meters visibility), untouched nature and a huge variety of underwater formations and amazing diving sites.
- o Diving in Santa Maria is a very exclusive experience. Diving companies are committed to preserving protected areas and respect a strict diving schedule, so there is only one company and limited number of divers per time slot in each place.

OUR TRAVELLERS

Participants will have a unique, immersive experience and a [deep connection with the ocean](#). They will experience unforgettable moments of personal fulfilment while contributing directly to ocean conservation. In addition to the lifelong memories that become stories to relive and share, participants will also gain knowledge that they can hopefully apply in the future. They will also leave the experience with the certainty that they have strongly contributed to the sustainability of this conservation project. Curiosity and a desire to make a difference are the main requirements for participation in this experience. Come aboard on one-of-a-kind holiday for experienced divers.





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© Pepe Briz



© NUNO VASCO RODRIGUES UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

EXPERTS

ANA FILIPA SOBRAL

Ana holds a BSc degree in Biology and after a period working on whale shark and manta ray conservation in Mozambique, she chased her old dream of going to the Azores



islands and start an MSc degree. Once there, she realised that this was one of the few places in the world where sicklefin devil rays (*Mobula tarapacana*) gather in large groups making it the perfect place to study them, and so she founded Manta Catalog Azores. For the past nine years, Ana has been collecting data on the occurrence of these mobulid rays and is now a PhD candidate studying population genetics and connectivity of migratory elasmobranchs in the Atlantic Ocean. The main goal fuelling her research has been to help fill the knowledge gaps on elasmobranch biology and ecology in order to ultimately assist in the design of effective conservation and management plans aimed at protecting their populations in this remote region of the North Atlantic Ocean.

NUNO VASCO RODRIGUES

Nuno is a marine biologist with a master degree in integrated Ocean Studies.



Throughout his career, he worked in several leading institutions in the field of marine studies and conservation, has been involved in conservation projects, and has been part of many scientific expeditions. He is the author of dozens of scientific articles and three books on marine fauna, having contributed to many others. Nuno specialises in underwater photography, using the image as a study and communication tool to support conservation. He contributes regularly to several institutions, namely National Geographic Portugal. His images have been widely published in books, newspapers and magazines and also exhibited globally, having several of them achieved awards in international competitions. Recently, he was considered the conservation photographer of the year 2021 for Ocean Geographic and achieved 2nd place in the photojournalism category.

THE AZORES & SANTA MARIA

Located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, just a few hours from both mainland Europe and North America, the Azores archipelago has a unique natural heritage and historic relationship with the ocean. Comprised of nine islands and extending from the coastline to the depths of the open sea are important marine ecosystems such as seamounts, hydrothermal vents and deep coral gardens.

The volcanic origin of the Azores archipelago, its remote location and the strong influence of the Gulf stream make the islands and surrounding waters an oasis for Atlantic species. The Azores' temperate waters are home to an incredible biodiversity! Swimming in this unique deep blue world, manta and devil rays are charismatic species that capture the imagination of island visitors.

Santa Maria is the oldest island of the Azores, existing for over 6 million years. It is a small island, measuring approximately 17 kilometres long by nine kilometres wide and boasts a population of close to 5500 people. Together with the Island of São Miguel, they form the Eastern Group of the Azores archipelago. Being the most southerly and easterly island in the Azores, Santa Maria has a warmer and drier climate and is known as the Sunshine Island.

Despite its importance and richness, the Azorean natural patrimony is fragile and needs to be protected. Engaging local and tourist communities in the protection of these habitats and raising awareness of the urgency to protect them are top priorities for conservation projects in order to ensure a sustainable future for the ocean.

THE HOTEL | SANTA MARIA HOTEL (4****)



BOOKING

To reserve your place on this Maldives Manta Expedition, please send an email to Niv Froman via info@mantaexpeditions.com.

Price for this 8 days / 7 nights expedition includes full board accommodation in the 4 stars Santa Maria Hotel, soft drinks, tea and coffee, 10 dives at the Ambrosio Seamount, Formigas Islet, and in several other marine reserves, leisure activities in Santa Maria Island, transportation to and from Santa Maria airport, taxes and service fees. Daily guidance by Ana Filipa Sobral (Manta Catalog Azores project leader) and conservation Photography (Photo-ID) workshop with photographer Nuno Vasco Rodrigues - <https://www.nunovascorodrigues.com>.

Price excludes flights, dive courses, dive gear rental, add-on excursions (for example hiking/ BTT tour, birdwatching, canyoning), alcoholic drinks and travel insurance.

