



I also visited Obidos, a medieval town. The scenery is great and you can take great photos anywhere.

5 May Lisbon -> Horta: Start of Azores Expedition 🌞

I met 7 of my teammates from UK, Germany, USA, and the Netherlands right at the Lisbon Airport. They are all nice people. We arrived at Horta in the afternoon, had briefing and introduction, a nice dinner and a walk to the marina. It's 22:30 when we got back to the Ecolodge. Have to start working tomorrow and meet my beloved dolphins and whales.

6 May Azores Expedition - Day 2



We started off today with more introduction and headed to the marina. Yet, when we left the harbour, we had problems with the engine. So, we could only start doing the research at around 15:00. We sailed along the coastline and see some 20 bottlenose dolphins jumping and playing all around us! I was on the data duty today and had a busy time on board. Didn't have much chance to

take photos, but I did get at least one nice shot of the bottlenose! I'll be on the same busy duty tomorrow but I learnt a lot today.



7 May Azores Expedition - Day 3

We started early this morning but the wind and waves were really strong. As I didn't sleep well last night worrying about the breakfast duty and data duty for today, I got seasick and fed the fish under the strong wind and waves. The captain said the waves were 2.4m high on average! My team members are really nice and one of them even offered me herbal oil. As I'm the third



one feeding the fish, the captain decided to head back to the pier. He did spot a suspected beaked whale today. When we got back on shore, it started to rain heavily when we were having lunch on the outside. We then got back to the Ecolodge and had slide show on cetaceans, and then the birthday cake for one of our team members! You know what, the cake is in sperm whale shape and it's blue. We all got "blue tooth" after eating the cake. 🍷

8 May Azores Expedition - Day 4



What a day is today! Can you imagine how stunning it was to see >1000 Cory' Shearwater, >300 Common dolphins and a humpback whale all at a time! We saw this today, just like what you see on Animal Planet, yeah!!! Under the choppy sea, our captain spotted flocks of birds heading to one direction. They were rushing to share the meal with dolphins and

whale! The whale breached in front of us all, though it is never possible to take a picture of it. Amazing, amazing and amazing!

I was on the lookout duty today and could take photos when cetaceans were spotted. But it was so difficult to hang on to



the rail while taking photos. What can you expect from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean? I did take some nice shots though. I also learnt how to clean the boat and tried the famous galao (Portuguese milky coffee) when getting back to the pier around 16:00. It's such a great day! 🍷

9 May Azores Expedition - Day 5

Another great day! We encountered 4 fin whales within half an hour after leaving the calm harbour today. You know, fin whales are the second largest on Earth! We followed them





for some time and took photos of them for photo-identification. Then we headed north to find sperm whales, my big bus! They are on top of my wish list today. We found 4 adults and 1 calf (a

baby girl). Great! Things are getting better and better, and I'm sure more will be coming with God's blessing. Oh, by the way, I am responsible for taking the boat log today.

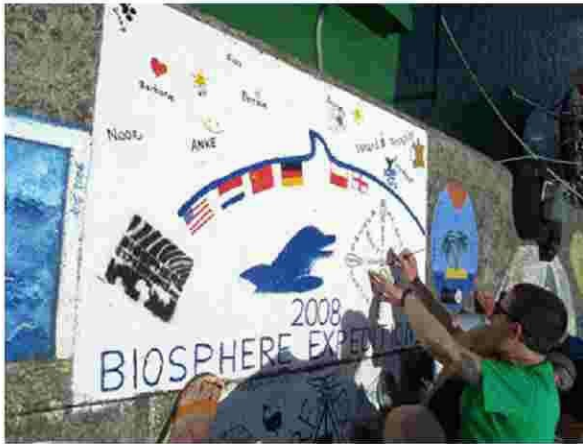


10 May Azores Expedition - Day 6



All work and no play make us a dull team. So, we had a day-off onshore after 4 days' hard work on board. Ronald, our expedition leader, had been so kind to drive us around the island to look at the caldera, lighthouse remains, volcano, lookout point for whales and other sites resulted from volcanic activities and earthquake in the past. The scenery was great and exotic. It's around 22:30 when we got back home.

11 May Azores Expedition - Day 7



As the wind was picking up, we had to stay onshore today. We finished the painting at the marina for this year and learnt some more on the cetaceans of Azores and the Atlantic from the researcher. Then we worked on the computer and cropped the photos for photo-identification. I know we'll be having curry chicken for tonight's dinner. Hope the sea will get calm tomorrow.

12 May Azores Expedition - Day 8

It's a dolphin day today! Not long after we left the marina, we encountered some 150 bottlenose dolphins near to the coast of Faial. They were all around us, bow riding, playing, socializing, etc. They stayed with us for like half an hour and we all took many good photos today. Then we kept on sailing and found some 25 common dolphins in the afternoon. Wow, it's really great to see them again! I'm actually on the hydrophone duty today, but I can only hear water and a couple of dolphin whistles. No sperm whale's click was heard.

13 May Azores Expedition - Day 9

Another wonderful day! The lookout informed us that there are sperm whales around. So, we headed out to find them and had been following them for almost the whole day. Some of my favorite common dolphins (~300 of them) came to check us out from time to time. We ended up identifying 16 sperm whale individuals. Being on camera duty today, I used the Nikon D70 provided. I was so busy that I



almost didn't have a chance for lunch as the whales kept on showing up. On our way back, guess what, we met the rare and mysterious Cuvier's beaked whales! The four of them, both male and female, even came quite close to us. I took pictures of them as well. I contributed to science today by taking quite a lot of sperm whale photo-ID, yeah! The weather won't be too good tomorrow, so we'll have a day-off and go to Pico.

14 May Azores Expedition - Day 10



We went hiking at Pico for ~4.5 hours down the mountain. We all found the scenery felt like Lord of the Ring as it's foggy around with exotic grassland fenced up by volcanic rocks. There were many cows around. After some 12 km's walk, we arrived at Madalena. As the ferry departed at 18:00, we went for ice-cream and drinks and got back to Horta for dinner.

15 May Azores Expedition - Day 11

I'm running out of adjectives. Where else on Earth can you encounter 8 different cetacean species in 7 days at sea? And we met the world's largest creatures today - the Blue Whale! They were on top of my wish list today, so you can imagine how excited I was when I saw them. They are really huge. What's more, we met the pilot



whales, traveling together with common dolphins! This is the first sighting of pilot whales this year! And the lovely common dolphins came to play with us for like 3 times in one day. The day ended with another encounter with 2 fin whales (the second largest). What more can I ask for?

16 May Azores Expedition - Day 12

This is the last day at sea. And today, we stayed the whole day with sperm whales. There were over 30 encounters and we were all very busy on board taking data and photos. The tail of sperm whale is really beautiful! Four common dolphins came to check us out and said goodbye to us. Everybody was happy and went shopping after the boat trip. And I bought two silver pendants (a whale and a tail) for myself.

17 May End of Azores Expedition: Horta -> Lisbon

Adeus, os meus delfins queridos e baleias ("Goodbye, my beloved dolphins and whales"). It's sad to leave but I really have to thank God for giving us a great time here. I'm sure I'll come back to the Azores some time in my life.

18 May Lisbon -> Amsterdam -> Hong Kong

Early morning flight back home

19 May Hong Kong

Back home early in the morning

Although our research is finished, our team still can't forget the turtle time and the seabird time. It is the time for the turtles and birds to hide away from us. It is so funny! 🌐



I am glad that I can help protect my beloved dolphins and whales through research. I am so much touched by their eagerness to show up and let us meet them face-to-face. The Azores was a place for whaling in the past, but it's now a paradise for whales and dolphins. This trip is such an unforgettable experience to me. I've told my dolphin and whale friends that some time in my life, I'll come back to visit them again. I believe, with a loving heart, everything will become wonderful.