AFRIQUE UNIE · TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Cape Verde in 10 days: four islands, day by day

Cape Verde is often reduced to the beaches of Sal and Boa Vista. This ten-day trip reveals the other side of the archipelago: the history of Santiago, the Fogo volcano, the music of Mindelo and the dizzying valleys of Santo Antão. Four islands, two domestic flights and a ferry, for a journey that combines hiking, culture and an easy-going way of life.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Praia and Cidade Velha (night : Praia)

Arrive in Praia, the capital, on the island of Santiago. Stay on the Plateau, the historic quarter perched above the city, with its colourful façades, central square and ethnographic museum. The next day, head to Cidade Velha, about fifteen kilometres to the west. Founded by the Portuguese in the 15th century, it was the first European colonial town in the tropics and a hub of the Atlantic slave trade; it is now listed by UNESCO. Climb to the Fortaleza Real de São Filipe for the view, then explore Rua Banana, one of the oldest streets in the archipelago, the pillory and the ruins of the cathedral. Back in town, dive into the bustle of Sucupira market.

Day 3 · Inland Santiago and Tarrafal (night : Tarrafal)

Cross the island from south to north on a mountain road of an hour and a half to two hours, through farming valleys, maize fields and hilltop villages. Stop in Assomada, whose market is one of the liveliest on the island, then in the Serra Malagueta natural park for a short hike along the ridges, often in the mist. On arrival, Tarrafal has a pretty beach of pale sand lined with palm trees, one of the most pleasant on Santiago for swimming. Also visit the former colonial-era camp for political prisoners, now a museum, a sober and moving place. In the evening, have grilled fish facing the bay.

Days 4-5 · The Fogo volcano (night : Chã das Caldeiras)

Return to Praia for a very short flight, or a longer ferry trip, to São Filipe on the island of Fogo. The small town of colonial houses overlooks a black sand beach. Then drive up, in about an hour, to Chã das Caldeiras, a village set inside the caldera, partly destroyed by the 2014 and 2015 eruption and rebuilt by its inhabitants, who grow vines there. The next day, set off at dawn with a local guide to climb Pico do Fogo, at 2,829 metres: a steep ascent of several hours, then a fast descent through the ash. Less demanding, the walk around Pico Pequeno, the crater of the latest eruption, is just as impressive.

Days 6-7 · Mindelo, capital of music (night : Mindelo)

Head back down to São Filipe for a flight to São Vicente, usually connecting in Praia. Mindelo, the home town of Cesária Évora, curves around a superb bay, with its pastel-coloured colonial houses. The next day, stroll around Praça Nova, the municipal market and the fish market, then drive up Monte Verde, the island's highest point, for the view over the archipelago. In the afternoon, the beach at Baía das Gatas, sheltered by a rocky reef, is good for swimming. The evening is the best time: many bars and restaurants host musicians playing morna and coladeira. If you come in February, the carnival is unforgettable.

Days 8-9 · The valleys of Santo Antão (night : Ponta do Sol or Paul)

The ferry links Mindelo with Porto Novo, on Santo Antão, in about an hour; the crossing can be rough. Then take the cobbled Corda road, which climbs through the mountains among ridges and pine woods, down to the north coast. The next day, do the island's most famous hike: from the Cova crater, you walk down into the Paul Valley, among terraced crops, sugar cane and banana trees, in three to four hours. Alternatively, follow the coastal path between Ponta do Sol and Cruzinha, via the village of Fontainhas, clinging to the cliff. Stay in a guesthouse, where you will be served cachupa, the national dish.

Day 10 · Back to Mindelo and home (night : Return flight)

Catch the morning ferry from Porto Novo back to Mindelo, leaving some margin: timetables can change with the weather and the season. Use your last hours for a little shopping in town, such as grogue, the local sugar cane spirit, coffee from Fogo or recordings of Cape Verdean music. São Vicente airport, about fifteen minutes from the centre, has a few direct international flights, but most travellers fly home with a connection via Praia, Sal or Lisbon. Check your connection times carefully in advance: it is often wiser to spend a night on the island your long-haul flight departs from.

Getting around

There are two ways to travel between the islands: domestic flights, quick but with changeable schedules, and ferries, cheap but sometimes slow and at the mercy of the sea. The link between São Vicente and Santo Antão is the most reliable. On the islands, aluguers, shared minibuses and pick-ups, connect the villages; taxis and hiring a car with a driver are handy for mountain stages.

When to go

From November to June, the dry season brings sunny, pleasant weather, with often strong winds from December to March. This is the best time for hiking on Santo Antão and climbing Pico do Fogo. From August to October, some rain falls and it is hotter and more humid, but the valleys turn lush and green. The sea stays cool in winter.

Practical information

Cape Verde

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/cape-verde/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	none
Currency	Cape Verdean escudo (CVE)
Languages	Portuguese, Creole
Plugs	type C, F · dialling code +238 · UTC−1
Emergencies	police 132 · ambulance 130 ou 139 · fire 131

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/cape-verde-in-10-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).