



CARIBOU AZORES

Testimonial from Mercedes

Knowing and trusting the hosts, I took the leap. What I could not have anticipated was how completely the week would exceed what that trust had promised.

The Convento de São Francisco in Vila Franca do Campo is the kind of place that stops you at the threshold. A 17th century Franciscan monastery, lovingly restored, where centuries of silence seem to have settled into the stone itself. The rooms are simple and beautiful. The main terrace, open to the Atlantic on three sides, becomes the natural place to begin and end the day.

Each morning began with a chakra meditation in the cloister – an invitation to arrive fully in the day before the day itself began. It was an unusual practice for me. By the end of the week, I missed it before it was over.

What followed each morning after breakfast was the Impulse – a short introduction by Regula offering an idea or a lens through which to look at something familiar differently. Not a lecture. Not a lesson. Something closer to what [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry](#) meant when he wrote about seeing with the heart rather than the eyes. The introduction was never the point in itself – it was the footing of a landing pier, firm enough to step onto before venturing further out into one's own thinking.

This is where the week distinguished itself most clearly from anything I had experienced before. The Impulses ranged across territory I would not have thought to explore alone: being in the middle of the Atlantic and exploring the influence of water on the mind; the quiet power of reconnecting physically with the earth; the question of what the body already knows about healing itself; what life is genuinely asking of you at this particular moment; the nature of consciousness and how it evolves through a life. None of it was prescriptive. What it offers instead is the rare and undervalued experience of thinking things through for yourself, in a setting that makes that kind of thinking feel both natural and necessary. I left several sessions not with conclusions, but with questions I had never thought to ask – and that have stayed with me since.

The daily excursions revealed the island with an intimacy that independent travel rarely allows. The half-circumnavigations – west one day, east another – unfolded like two entirely different stories told by the same landscape: volcanic peaks vanishing into cloud, crater lakes of an almost implausible green, villages where time moves at its own pace. Furnas was a world unto itself – the botanical garden vast and almost otherworldly, the hot springs rising from the earth in slow, sulphurous clouds. The dolphin and whale-watching expedition took us out into the Atlantic, with naturalists bringing the marine life into focus. On Sunday, the hike up to the Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Paz, overlooking Vila Franca do Campo and the Atlantic stretching endlessly beyond, offered something quieter: a moment of perspective, in every sense of the word.

The evenings followed a rhythm of their own. Each dinner had been chosen with the same attentiveness that ran through everything else – restaurants scattered across the island, each one a genuine discovery, the food local and unhurried and quietly exceptional. Every night ended back at the Convento with a nightcap and a short 'good night story' – a ritual that sounds modest until you experience it, and that managed, each time, to close the day on precisely the right note.

What Caribou Azores has built is difficult to categorise. It is not a holiday, not a retreat, not a seminar. It is something closer to a week in which every element – the place, the programme, the island itself – has been curated to quietly shift the way you see things...

Mercedes Aubert, Geneva

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