

## WALK 19 (SÃO JORGE 4)

Pico das Caldeirinhas • Pico da Esperança • Norte Grande • Fajã do Ouvidor

Distance/time: 20km/12.4mi; 4h45min

Grade: moderate, with a gradual ascent of 250m/820ft on a gravel track to Pico da Esperança and a long descent of 1050m/3445ft on track and road. *But note:* because of the altitude, this walk should only be tackled on cloudless days or when there are only high clouds.

Equipment: see pages 47-48; optional: bathing things

How to get there: by taxi to Pico das Caldeirinhas (the highest point on the Urzelina/Santo António road). Most taxi drivers know the spot.

To return: by pre-arranged taxi from Fajã do Ouvidor; a good meeting point is the car park/bar above the harbour.



Pico da Esperança



This walk leads along the central ridge of the island to Pico da Esperança, the highest summit on São Jorge. This high mountain region is often shrouded in mist, so pick a cloudless day to enjoy the splendid views, reaching out to all neighbouring islands of the central group. You will pass through the village of Norte Grande before descending to Fajã do Ouvidor, a magnificent coastal plain with a small harbour. The name of this *fajã* dates back to the times of the monarchy, when an *ouvidor*, or 'listener', settled here. Each of the islands had such an official with his 'ear to the ground', who informed the king of local problems before things got out of hand.

Start out opposite Pico das Caldeirinhas on the URZELINA/SANTO ANTÓNIO ROAD: turn right (east) up the gravel track. Pico do Pedro (901m/2955ft) rises to your right. Pass a DUCK POND on the right (45min). About half an hour later, there is a plaque on the left commemorating the victims of a plane crash in 1999. Then you pass a small CRATER LAKE on your right (1h30min) and cross a small dam. Soon you pass a plaque inscribed 'PICO DA ESPERANÇA' on the left. Take a sharp left turn just 100m/yds past the plaque and follow this minor track uphill. Soon after a right-hand bend, you will see another crater lake on your left. The track now peters out; continue to climb in an anti-clockwise direction on the grassy rim of the crater, until you reach the TRIG POINT ('IGC 1937') on the highest point of Pico da Esperança ('Peak of Hope' 1053m/3454ft; 2h).

Return to the main track and turn left to continue. The next distinct volcano is Pico do Arieiro (2h50min). A short time later, an abandoned QUARRY with lichen-covered rocks appears on the right. Almost immediately, Pico Pinheiro rises on the right; to the left you can see a partially-collapsed lava tunnel (see page 89). Turn

left at a FORK (3h05min) and pass a sharp right turn almost at once. Soon you cross a CATTLE GRID; a building used by the shepherds is on the right. Cross another CATTLE GRID after some 400m/yds.

Bear left when you reach ANOTHER FORK (3h25min). Turn left again at the next T-junction. When you reach another junction after 100m/yds, bear left (almost straight) uphill. This track contours along the hillside, undulating slightly. Take the first major turn on your right (3h45min); this forks sharply to the right and runs straight downhill. Ignore a minor right turn and follow the main track down to Norte Grande, where you meet the main road just opposite the village church, by a BUS SHELTER (4h05min).

Turn right for a few paces, then go left down the street just in front of the church. Keep straight ahead to a VIEWPOINT (4h15min) from where you enjoy a splendid view down onto Fajã do Ouvidor. Descend the cobbled path on the left, winding steeply downhill through lush vegetation. The path widens to a track by a WATER-PUMPING BUILDING and tank. Soon cross a road diagonally to the right and continue to descend on the gravel track. You reach a crossroads with a plane tree in the middle just past the first houses of Fajã do Ouvidor (4h35min). Turn right at the crossroads and follow the road (with fine views down to the coast), then continue on the cliff path to the HARBOUR (4h45min).