

AFRICA · BEACHES · ISLANDS · HIKING · ADVENTURE · CULTURE



Cape Verde

Ten volcanic islands some 600km off Senegal, each with its own personality: flat, windy Sal and Boa Vista for beaches and kitesurfing, vertiginous green Santo Antão for some of the Atlantic's finest hiking, Fogo's active volcano, and Mindelo's music bars, home town of the singer Cesária Évora. The culture is a Creole blend of Portugal and West Africa.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Cape Verde and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 28 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Praia	 CURRENCY Cape Verdean escudo (CVE) £1 ≈ CVE 131	 LANGUAGE Cape Verdean Creole, Portuguese	 BEST TIME Nov–Jun
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£200 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 6h direct ~£280–£650 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-1 standard time

Cape Verde splits neatly in two. The flat, sandy eastern islands of Sal and Boa Vista take most direct flights from the UK and nearly all the big resorts, with dependable sunshine and strong trade winds. The real character lies west and south: São Vicente's port city of Mindelo, the ferry hop to Santo Antão's terraced valleys and cliff paths, Santiago's African-flavoured markets and the UNESCO-listed ruins of Cidade Velha, and the black volcanic cone of Fogo, where wine is grown inside the crater. A good first trip combines a few days on the beach with a week of island-hopping, ideally including Santo Antão's hiking trails.

Outside the resort strips the pace is slow and the islands' 'no stress' motto is taken seriously: aluguers (shared minibuses) leave when full, ferries run late and inter-island flights change at short notice. Prices sit between those of North Africa and southern Europe; guesthouses and local restaurants are good value, while imported goods cost more than you might expect. Hikers, music lovers and kitesurfers get the most from it, while anyone expecting lush tropical scenery on Sal may find the landscape stark and dusty. Many visitors are surprised by the power of the Atlantic surf, which makes swimming hazardous on some beaches, and by how cool the mountain evenings feel.

Top 5 highlights

1

NATURE

Santo Antão's trails

Cobbled paths zigzag down from the rim of the Cova crater into the Paul valley's sugar cane and banana terraces, and along sea cliffs between Ponta do Sol and Fontainhas. Grogue distilleries and simple guesthouses punctuate the walks.

2

ADVENTURE

Pico do Fogo

Cape Verde's highest peak, 2,829m, rises from the crater floor of Chã das Caldeiras, where villagers rebuilt after the 2014–15 eruption buried two settlements. The dawn climb is steep and gravelly; the run down the ash slopes is exhilarating.

3

HISTORY

Cidade Velha

Founded as Ribeira Grande in 1462, this was the first European colonial town in the tropics and a hub of the Atlantic slave trade. See the stone pillory, the ruined cathedral and the Fortaleza Real de São Filipe above.

4

BEACH

Santa Maria and Kite Beach, Sal

Sal's southern tip has the country's most reliable sunshine, a long turquoise bay with a fishing pier, and world-class wind: Kite Beach and Ponta Preta draw kitesurfers and windsurfers through the winter months.

5

WILDLIFE

Boa Vista's dunes and turtles

Boa Vista is ringed by empty beaches and has Saharan-style dunes inland at the Viana Desert. From July to October, loggerhead turtles come ashore to nest; join a licensed night walk rather than going alone.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Praia

≈ 140,000 people

The capital sprawls around the Plateau, a compact colonial old town of squares and markets. Use it as a base for Cidade Velha and Santiago's mountainous interior rather than a destination in itself.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Mindelo

≈ 70,000 people

Cape Verde's cultural capital: a handsome harbour town of pastel colonial buildings, live morna and coladeira in the bars, and the departure point for ferries to Santo Antão.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Espargos

≈ 20,000 people

Sal's workaday administrative town sits beside the international airport; few stay, but it has cheaper local cafés and buses down to the beaches of Santa Maria.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Cape Verde

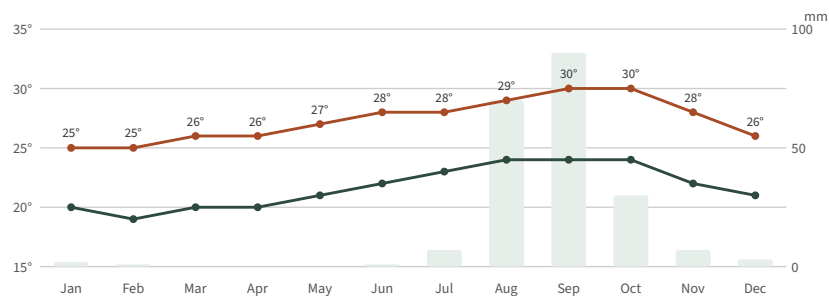
Best time: **Nov–Jun.**



■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Praia

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar	Mindelo Carnival Cape Verde's biggest carnival, with months of preparation behind its floats, costumed groups and drummers; the main parades fill Mindelo's streets in the days before Ash Wednesday.
Jun	Festa de São João Porto Novo on Santo Antão celebrates St John around 24 June with kola san jon drumming and dancing and processions carrying model ships.
Aug	Baía das Gatas Festival An open-air music festival on a bay east of Mindelo, held over a full-moon weekend in August, with Cape Verdean and international acts and camping by the sea.

How much does Cape Verde cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ CVE 5,906 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £100 per person / day ≈ CVE 13,125 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £200 per person / day ≈ CVE 26,250 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Cachupa

The national dish: hominy maize slow-cooked with beans, cassava and sweet potato, plus fish or pork in the richer cachupa rica; fried leftovers with an egg make breakfast.

Grogue

Fiery sugar-cane spirit pressed and distilled in small trapiches on Santo Antão and Santiago; try it neat or as ponche, sweetened with molasses or honey.

Pastel com diabo dentro

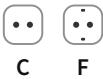
'Pastry with the devil inside': fried turnovers of sweet potato and maize dough filled with spicy tuna, sold from street stalls and cafés.

Getting around

Island-hopping takes planning. Domestic flights link the islands with airports, often routing via Praia or Sal, but carriers and schedules have changed repeatedly in recent years, so book ahead and reconfirm. CV Interilhas ferries cover many routes, notably the hour-long Mindelo–Porto Novo crossing to Santo Antão, which has no working airport. On land, aluguers (shared minibuses and pick-ups) leave when full; taxis are cheap but unmetered. Car hire is most useful on Santiago, Sal and Boa Vista.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **130**

Fire: **131**

Police: **132**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

DIALLING CODE

+238

TIME ZONE

UTC-1 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not traditionally expected, but tourist restaurants appreciate around 10%; round up taxi fares and tip hiking guides and drivers.

ETIQUETTE

Greet people with 'bom dia' or 'boa tarde' before getting down to business. Dress modestly away from the beach, and ask before photographing people, especially in markets and rural villages.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Amílcar Cabral International Airport (SID), Sal; Aristides Pereira International Airport (BVC), Boa Vista; Nelson Mandela International Airport (RAI), Praia

Visas & entry for Cape Verde

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can enter Cape Verde as a visitor for up to 30 days without a visa.

To stay longer or to travel for other reasons, you must meet the Cape Verde government's entry requirements.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Bat Lyssavirus

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Cape Verde

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 13 Jan 2027	Democracy and Freedom Day
Wed 20 Jan 2027	National Heroes Day
Wed 10 Feb 2027	Ash Wednesday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Sat 1 May 2027	Worker's Day
Tue 1 Jun 2027	International Children's Day
Mon 5 Jul 2027	National Independence Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Portuguese

ENGLISH	PORTUGUESE	SAY IT
Hello	Olá	<i>oh-LAH</i>
Thank you	Obrigado / Obrigada	<i>oh-bree-GAH-doo / oh-bree-GAH-dah</i>
Please	Por favor	<i>poor fah-VOR</i>
Excuse me	Com licença	<i>kong lee-SEN-sah</i>
How much is this?	Quanto custa?	<i>KWAN-too KOOSH-tah</i>

Know before you go

Never schedule an inter-island flight or ferry for the day before your flight home; delays and cancellations are common, and winter swells can stop ferries altogether.

The escudo is pegged to the euro and euros are widely accepted in tourist areas, though change comes in escudos. Vinti4 ATMs work well; card payment is patchy outside resorts.

The constant trade winds on Sal and Boa Vista disguise the strength of the sun, which is intense at this latitude; use high-factor sunscreen and cover up between late morning and mid-afternoon.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.