



Responsible Tourism Program

Conservation of Santa Maria's Land Snails
(Azores)



OUR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PROGRAM

This program is a result of Ilha a Pé's commitment to conserving Santa Maria Island's nature and biodiversity. It is proposed and offered in cooperation with **Desafio das Letras**, with support from project **LIFE SNAILS**, co-financed by the LIFE Programme.

Santa Maria is not only relevant for the richness and diversity of its former species, which are now observed as fossils, but also due to a set of fauna and flora species that are Island endemics and currently known to exist only here. These include numerous plant species that you may observe along the route, as well as various land snails whose presence may be less evident to a common tourist.

In addition to the sustainability measures we have implemented in our facilities - such as the use of renewable energy and the promotion of composting - you will encounter others as part of our programs. From 2023 onwards, we will be undertaking a series of measures to improve biodiversity in the surrounding land of our huts. This will not only enhance the view and aesthetics but also provide a more favorable habitat for species that are currently missing. Moreover, we will closely cooperate with our partners to conserve three endemic snail species, which are the focus of the ongoing project LIFE SNAILS.



If you are passionate about nature and biodiversity conservation, this program is perfect for you! Hopefully, it will be an ideal fit for your interests as well!

In essence, for those interested, we are proposing a **conservation program that combines the best of responsible tourism—providing hands-on involvement in essential conservation tasks—with the full opportunity and benefits of the Grand Route and our facilities.**

Instead of the regular 5-day hiking program, this will encompass a 9-day program, with the additional days devoted to your voluntary support in conservation works, such as planting native trees and shrubs, controlling invasive plants, collecting seeds, and, of course, interacting with and monitoring our land snails. Lodging and food for these additional days will not incur any charges for you; they will be supported by Desafio das Letras and the LIFE Programme as a reward for your valuable contributions.



When?

The 2023 edition of the conservation program is scheduled to **take place from October 27, 2023, to November 4, 2023.** The program is **limited to a maximum of 4 to 5 participants.**

The main concept behind this program is to **leverage the continuous 5-day hiking period with one-day volunteering breaks interspersed throughout each route segment.**

Instead of hiking every day, you will have the opportunity to participate in volunteering activities that contribute to nature conservation goals, organized together with our partners and the regional government services, as part of the impact tourism program of the LIFE SNAILS project.

These breaks will provide you with hands-on experience in conservation work and allow you to actively contribute to the preservation of Santa Maria Island's nature and biodiversity.

If you are interested in joining this unique and rewarding experience, reserve your spot in advance as places are limited. It is an excellent opportunity to make a positive impact on the environment while enjoying the beauty and diversity of Santa Maria Island.



What?

As the program's start approaches, we will provide you with additional information about the specific conservation tasks scheduled for each volunteering day. Overall, the anticipated tasks do not require exceptional physical effort or specific knowledge.

All works will be supervised and accompanied by a monitor from Desafio das Letras, who will stay with the group throughout the day and provide initial hands-on training on the daily tasks, as well as an introduction to their significance, purposes, and benefits for the conservation of endemic fauna and flora.

In addition to the details provided before your arrival, **the indicative program schedule for the 9 days is summarized below.** If, by any chance, you would like to participate in more days of nature conservation activities, in addition to those already planned, please contact Desafio das Letras. Together, you can explore the possibility of an alternative extended program. In such cases, lodging and food, while provided, will need to be arranged at other facilities, as available through other partners.

Date		Indicative Program / Schedule	
Thu 26.10.2023	Suggested Arrival	(Flight S44012, direct, departing at 11:35 GMT and arriving in Santa Maria Island at 13:05 local time)	
Fri 27.10.2023	GR – Day 1 (9.8 Km 4h30)	Morning Debriefing, followed by Vila do Porto – Malbusca	
Sat 28.10.2023	Conservation Day 1	Improving habitat for land snails around the Malbusca house	Planting/ sowing native plants (<i>Erica azorica</i> , <i>Morella faya</i> , <i>Picconia azorica</i>)
Sun 29.10.2023	GR – Day 2 (12.2 Km 6h00)	Malbusca – Lapa de Baixo	
Mon 30.10.2023	Conservation Day 2	Knowing Santa Maria's land snails	Land snail observation and monitoring through manual collection
Tue 31.10.2023	GR – Day 3 (17.5 km 7h00)	Lapa de Baixo – Norte	
Wed 01.11.2023	Conservation Day 3	Controlling invasive flora and collecting native seeds	Native seed collection and manual control of invasive flora (debarking and cutting)
Thu 02.11.2023	GR – Day 4 (19.5 km 7h00)	Norte – Raposo	
Fri 03.11.2023	Conservation Day 4	Improving habitat for land snails around the Raposo house	Planting/ sowing native plants (<i>Morella faya</i> , <i>Picconia azorica</i> , <i>Viburnum</i> , <i>Laurus azorica</i>)
Sat 04.11.2023	GR – Day 5 (22Km 6h30)	Raposo – Vila do Porto	
Sun 05.11.2023	Suggested Departure	(Flight S44012, with a stop-over in Ponta Delgada, departing at 15:25, arriving in Lisbon at 19:55 GMT)	

How much?

Hiking Days

Being the conservation program a part of the sustainability commitments of Ilha a Pé, we're offering it for a reduced rate, compared to the regular ones. In all, the applicable rates for the lodgment programs along the 5 days self-guided hiking include:

- **Package 1:** 4 nights + 4 dinners provided on the hut + 4 breakfasts provided on the hut: **130€/pax** (instead of the regular price of 250 €/pax)
- **Package 2:** Package 1 + sleeping bed + towel + luggage transfer between huts (max 10 kg): **170 €/pax** (instead of 320 €/pax)

It is upon your responsibility to get food for lunch (e.g. on local restaurants, bars and mini-markets along the way).

Conservation Days

Lodging and food on the conservation days will be offered to you by our partner **Desafio das Letras**, in exchange for your volunteer days (expected to take around 8h per day), with support of the LIFE SNAILS Project and the LIFE Programme:

- lodging will be offered on the same huts as for the hiking days, at no cost;
- breakfast and dinner will be offered on the huts as for the hiking days, at no extra cost;
- lunch (a light meal, based in sandwiches, fruit and water) will be provided on field, to eat on site, where conservation works undergo.

All materials needed for conservation works (gloves, bags for seed collection, tools for planting, ...) will be available or provided on site.

Travel

Flights are not included in the packages, you will have to book these by your own.

Note that you have flights from Lisbon to Santa Maria, operated by SATA AZORES AIRLINES, which allow you to “catch” up with the program schedule by departing from Lisbon on Thursday 26.10.2023 (Flight S44012, direct, departing at 11:35 GMT and arriving in Santa Maria Island at 13:05 local time), as well as for your way back on Sunday 05.11.2023 (Flight S44012, with a short stop-over in Ponta Delgada, departing at 15:25 local time and arriving in Lisbon at 19:55 GMT).

Other questions or information?

For more information on the **Grand Route** (map and terrain):

- <https://ilhape.com/map>

For more information on the program:

- on the trail and accommodation along the trail **please contact Ioannis** (ilhape@gmail.com, +351 964 474 768; <https://ilhape.com/>)
- on the conservation works and related issues, **please contact Luis** (luis.jordao@desafiodasletras.pt, +351 939 200 733)

