

# Cape Verde

Set sail with the Saharan trade winds and for days on end your good ship will rock and roll across stormy Atlantic seas. Ahead of you the horizon will stretch blue and unbroken and your journey will feel as if it'll never end. But then, just before you're halfway to Brazil, an island rises into view. You have reached Cape Verde, an archipelago that is of Africa, but not a part of it. Instead it's a magical place where the land and its people look and feel like the stunning offspring of Mediterranean, African and Caribbean lovers.

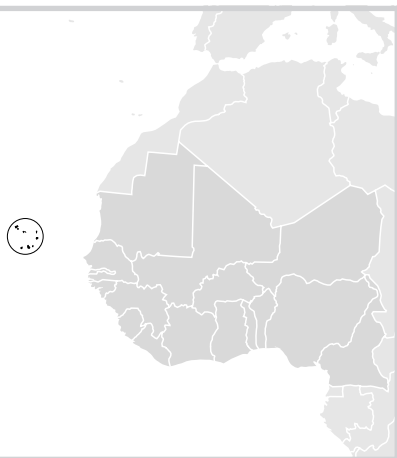
Though they might be but a miniscule dot on the map, these islands pack a punch. On the westerly islands piercing green valleys of flowers are hidden by craggy peaks with pine trees for headdresses. While to the east, wispy white dunes merge with seas of indigo blue on beaches of soft sand that invite you to stay for just another day.

Thanks to its remote location it's perhaps not surprising to learn that Cape Verde is very different to the rest of Africa. It's the most Westernised country in the region and the people are richer, better educated and healthier than almost anywhere else on the continent. Indeed, life here can sometimes feel like life in an American hip-hop video. Everywhere you go muscle-bound men walk with swagger and girls with Caribbean eyes swing their hips to the constant beat of the music for which Cape Verde is famed.

All things considered, this is a place that is so utterly unique and so special that it cannot but leave you enchanted.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 4035 sq km
- **Capital** Praia
- **Country code** ☎ 238
- **Famous for** Singer Cesária Évora, windsurfing
- **Languages** Portuguese, Crioulo
- **Money** Cabo Verde escudo (CVE); US\$1 = CVE85.75, €1 = CVE113
- **Population** 427,000
- **Visa** All non-Cape Verdean citizens require a visa; one-month tourist visas, issued on arrival at airports and ports, are €25 (payable in euros only).



**HOW MUCH?**

- **Taxi ride in Praia** CVE150
- **São Vicente to Santo Antão ferry** CVE700
- **Espresso coffee** CVE50
- **Guide to climb Mt Fogo** CVE3000
- **Fresh grilled tuna with rice and chips** CVE650

**LONELY PLANET INDEX**

- **1L of diesel** CVE167
- **1L of bottled water** CVE80
- **Bottle of beer** CVE100
- **Souvenir T-shirt** CVE1000
- **Plate of cachupa (bean and corn stew)** CVE250

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Mardi Gras** (p239) Swinging hips, elaborate costumes and dirty dancing; Mindelo's Mardi Gras celebration is one of the sexiest and most colourful festivals in Africa.
- **Santo Antão** (see the boxed text, p242) Hiking the misty and pine-clad ridges, the sheer canyons and the verdant valleys of Cape Verde's most spectacular island.
- **Mt Fogo** (see the boxed text, p245) Views to admire from the summit of this stunning, cinder-clad mountain, the country's only active volcano and, at 2829m, its highest peak.
- **Windsurfing** (p245 and p247) Riding t giant waves of Sal and Boa Vista – two of the world's finest windsurfing destinations.
- **Traditional music** (p232) Smoky back-room bars, listening to musicians wave loved ones goodbye with a *morna* (mournful old-style song).

**ITINERARIES**

- **One week** Fly into Sal (p245) and unwind for a couple of days on the beaches at Santa Maria (p246), which is a windsurfer's mecca. Next, head to Mindelo (p239), located on São Vicente, the country's cultural centre and prettiest town, and spend a day hopping from bar to

bar. From Mindelo, an hour-long ferry ride lands you in mountainous Santo Antão (p241), where stunning hikes cap off your trip.

- **Two weeks** From Santo Antão, head over to Fogo (p243) and lace up your hiking boots for a scramble up the perfectly formed volcanic mass of Mt Fogo. Recover from this with a day dozing in the pretty squares of São Filipe (p244), the island's capital, and then another day or two exploring the wine and coffee country on the northern side of the island. Finally, wind down on the fine and largely deserted beaches of Boa Vista (p247) or Maio (p250).
- **Three weeks** With three weeks, you can do all of the above, and have time to take in the scene in Praia (p234), the capital of Cape Verde, after which you can explore the mountains and beaches of Santiago's hinterland (p234).

**CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO**

Cape Verde is pleasant year-round. Even during the so-called rainy season from mid-August to mid-October, weeks can go by without a downpour. Thanks to cooling ocean currents and offshore winds, Cape Verde has the lowest temperatures of any country in West Africa, and also some of the most moderate, ranging from a minimum night-time average of 19°C in February to a maximum daytime average of 29°C from May to November.

From December to March you will need a sweater in the evenings and it's a good idea to pack an extra bed sheet, as hotels rarely provide enough bedding to keep you warm. Winter months are marked by strong winds, which blow in dust all the way from the Sahara.

See Climate Charts, p810, for more.

**HISTORY****Slavery, Drought & Neglect**

When Portuguese mariners discovered Cape Verde in 1456, the islands were uninhabited but fertile enough to attract the first group of settlers six years later. They founded Ribeira Grande (now Cidade Velha), the first European town in the tropics, on the island of Santiago. To work the land, settlers almost immediately began to import slaves from the West African coast. Plans by Genoese investors to create large sugar plantations never paid off, especially after the Caribbean proved so productive. However, the islands'