

## **Azores — history and culture**

Discovered in 1427, the Azores soon attracted people from the most diverse places, who established themselves here. This influx has allowed a sustained demographic growth ever since the time of early settlement (about 17.000 inhabitants in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century) up to the present (241.763 inhabitants divided by 19 municipalities and 5 cities).

The geostrategic location of the islands made them a singular place for migrations. First, as an area of immigration, they attracted people from the Portuguese Mainland, Madeira, Europe, Africa and even from the Far East, and later, as an area of emigration, as people left for Brazil, Canada, the United States, Bermudas, among others.

From this crossing of influences and civilizations arose a very rich culture, which is visible not only in the underwater heritage, part of which is still hidden in the depths of the Azorean sea, but also in the terrestrial heritage, materialized in fine buildings, such as churches, palaces, rural houses and gardens. The constant worries about earthquakes, which have always accompanied lives of the islanders, had a decisive impact on the way Azorean cultural activities developed; these include the Festivities of the Divine Holy Spirit, the Procession of Lord Holy Christ of Miracles and the bullfights.