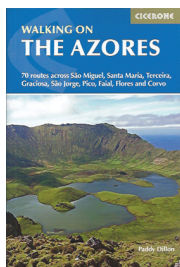


## Walking on the Azores



Paddy Dillon  
Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss,  
Oxenholme Rd, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7RL  
978 1 85284 908 5  
170 x 120mm  
287 pages, paperback  
2019  
£16.95

The Azores are a series of tips of large volcanoes in deep water nearly halfway across the Atlantic. Even then, Pico is the highest peak in Portuguese territory. They consist largely of black lava, young by geological standards and still jagged. The coastline is largely cliff and the rare beaches are littered with lava boulders. The scenery is fantastic, though, including some unusual stacks.

Onshore there are various lakes in volcano craters, again with unusual scenery. Volcanic activity is largely dormant but there are places with bubbling mud, fumaroles and even the risk of buildup of CO<sub>2</sub> in calm conditions.

There are protected areas on land and sea and there are the logistics of getting there, clarified by the book.

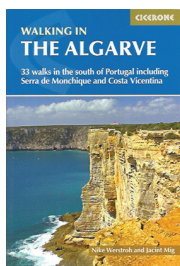
This is a surprisingly thick book with most of the routes being around the coasts or to summits with panoramic views, including to the top of Pico. All of the islands are visited and there are striking photographs, helped by the green vegetation, long waterfalls and volcanic calderas.

Maps are at 1:50,000 with contours colour shaded for height.

The nine islands range between 7 and 70km long and are between 6 and 250km apart. The islands' harbours are visited frequently by transatlantic sailors but kayak paddlers are a different matter. In practice, logistics are probably easier than heading north of the Arctic Circle away from mainland Europe and the temperatures are rather pleasanter. As nearly all the coastal villages are visited, including those with harbours, and most roads to them are described, this would be a useful book to have.

Imray's *Atlantic Islands* (Jun 05, p28), aimed at yachtsmen, would complement this book well.

## Walking in the Algarve



Nike Werstroh & Jacint Mig  
Cicerone  
978 1 85284 994 8  
170 x 120mm  
189 pages, paperback  
2nd edition 2019  
£16.95

Although the first half of the book, covering the eastern and central Algarve, has occasional meetings with rivers, the Ribeira de Odeleite, the Ribeira de Odelouca and the Rio Arde, it is less relevant to those on the water.

The final 25 pages are on the Atlantic west coast, which is subject to wind and waves, producing the most interesting conditions for experienced surfers, adding to Cicerone's *Trekking Portugal's Rota Vicentina* (Nov 19, p40) which devotes a whole book to this section of coast.

The most valuable part of this book is the 54 pages on the south coast. A more sheltered coast, it offers stacks, arches, cliffs, coves, caves and sink holes. Some beaches are only accessible by boat and there are plenty of boats putting this into practice. 'Small boats often sail up and down the coast to admire the coastline from the sea.'

'The scenery offer great photo opportunities and many people choose to admire the stacks from the cliffs, while others explore the coastline by boat.'

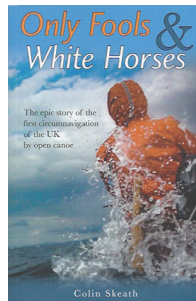
The cliffs are subject to erosion and cliff falls, with regular reminders through the coastal section of the book.

Beaches are all named on the maps, which help with their location. However, location of significant points is by degrees of latitude and longitude, given to six places of decimal, not too helpful for those using maps. Furthermore, distances are given in terms of walking time, difficult for those not walking a route precisely or not walking at the average speed, which can vary significantly with gradient and terrain.

There is some very informative advice on snake behaviour and on why even the Algarve's poisonous snakes might not be dangerous, their fangs being too far back. Finally, a reminder of the fresh seafood of the area is an attraction not immediately obvious.

As usual, it is the pictures which tell most about sea and shoreline conditions and a change of format has made Cicerone books more attractive of late, including some pictures across two pages in this one.

## Only Fools & White Horses



Colin Skeath  
Garmoran Publishing, Strontian  
978 1 913510 00 8  
200 x 130mm  
181 pages, paperback  
2020  
£12.99

In 1986 a Medway trio were the first to circumnavigate Britain and Ireland in one trip, the story presented in Bill Taylor's *Commitment & Open Crossings* (Feb 91, p21). Five years earlier, as a teacher in Gravesend, one of his pupils had been 14 year old Colin Skeath. Bill's outdoor pursuits group turned Colin from an angling enthusiast to a rock climbing addict, progressing from Harrison's Rocks near Tunbridge Wells (where I recall being required to wear plimsolls to reduce wear on the sandstone) to the nine day Muir Wall pitch in Yosemite, which he climbed with his 18 year old nephew, Davis. Kayak trips had also been among the activities of the outdoor pursuits group but Colin had been less keen on them.

He retired from the police in Yorkshire at the age of 49 and moved to Strontian on Loch Sunart. By this time he had returned to paddling, doing the DW Race several times, mostly in K2, a race in which the Medway paddlers were also regularly successful.

His big challenge was to be a circumnavigation of Great Britain, undertaken with Davis in an open canoe with two masts, the fitting out by Solway Dory. They were to be sailing and paddling but supported only by Colin's wife, Katrina, in the van every few days. Davis had never been in a canoe when they went on a course with Ray Goodwin. Ray, who writes the introduction, only gave them a 50% chance of finishing the trip. I would not have put it that high, Davis having had only a dozen days in a canoe by the time they left. There was all the potential here for a lame duck trip when they set out in 2017. The start was to be from Colin's house near the head of Loch Sunart, a loch that does not normally feature on circumnavigations.

Nor do some of their other lines, some ambitiously long crossings taking them far out to sea. They crossed the Moray Firth from Berriedale to Findochty, the Forth from Arbroath to Skateraw, the Humber, the Wash, the Thames estuary from Orford Haven to Joss Bay, the Bristol Channel from Bude via Lundy to Lydstep and Cardigan Bay from Bill's house, visited at Llangrannog, to Porth Oer. These were similar to or longer than the routes taken by sea kayak circumnavigators.

It was the Irish Sea which was totally different. From Anglesey they headed north to the Isle of Man then crossed to the Northern Ireland coast before coming back over to hit Scotland at Machrihanish. This bold line took them completely clear of the races at the Mull of Galloway and the Mull of Kintyre and shortened the route considerably. They arrived back at Strontian having covered 3,322km in 86 days, including 19 days off the water, 67 active days, 50km per day on the water. This compares with Paul Caffyn and Nigel Dennis taking 85 days, 68 on the water, a paddling average of 55km per day over 3,710km. The Medway trio's 4,204km around Britain and Ireland took 155 days. There was an advantage of sails, despite the broad hull.

Colin and Davis had tensions between them at times, discussed in the book. The Medway trio's lack of such issues was unusual, particularly when two of them had to keep secret a terrible piece of news at the end of their trip.

The fact that Colin was familiar with Bill's book can be taken from the fact that data in the indices is copied across directly.

Illustration is with 20 pages of colour photographs but it is the black and white route map which stands out in my mind. I would still put their chances of success at less than 50% so all the more credit to what they achieved, the first circumnavigation of Great Britain by open canoe. The book brings back many memories for me and will for anyone else who has paddled much of our coastline.