

August 2021
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I go to Faial;

I woke up 5:20am in a haze and I struggled to find the reason why I was up in this darkness. The gear by the side of my bed reminds me and bleary eyed I dress myself with the clothes I neatly scattered the night before, fill my camel back and steal some sweet bread and pão de milho, I shouldn't go empty handed right? The walk up to the salão passes quickly. I sit down on a bench by the salão at 5:50am and the minutes tick by, each minute after 6am I get exponentially more anxious. Am I at the right place? Did the van driver forget? 6:14am a red pickup truck fires up down the street and zooms up to me. I can't tell if this is the man I'm supposed to meet, I don't recognize him, but I just assume he is because I have to get to Madalena somehow. I toss my backpack in the back and get in. Man of few words, he mumbles a few words of assertion and drifts into a kind of trance. He seems mesmerized by this drive he takes every day taking turns in his pickup as if he's in Monaco. I ask him if he has kids and he replies 3. All girls. "Esperando um menino ainda?" (Still waiting for a boy) I ask. "O menino não vai chegar, terminamos ja" (A boy is not going to come, We're done). We both laugh, although he is noticeably less boisterous and we are back to the eerie morning dream.

We drive in silence with the nearly full moon drifting through the swirling clouds. We park by a garage and he opens it, unveiling a huge bus. I was expecting a little taxi or a bus van but this?! He turns it on, I get in and soon we are taking the turns we just took even harder than before in these small roads, eerily empty in the dark morning. Slowly we begin to pick up people and the island begins to wake as I drift back to sleep. I wake up every time people board, noting we arrive by the airport at 7:40am. Suddenly I wake up and am in Madalena. Boarding the ferry was straightforward. I flash my printed ticket and board the boat. 8:45am was a little later than I expected but I think now I'm realizing the time slot was when we were boarding, not the trip time. I enjoyed the wind, but soon paid little attention to the passing water and islands as I discovered the people next to me were from Rhode Island. One is a guy who just graduated and is becoming a construction manager in Maryland. The other, Alicia, who left finance to start a holistic coffee shop in Rhode Island. She took some time during college to essentially do sweet life on deck and visit multiple countries—where she started to try and appreciate all the different kinds of coffee. We hit it off pretty quickly as we both share a love for hiking, running and the outdoors. We talk about running, summiting Pico which apparently doesn't actually require a guide, running in college, and this interesting watch she has called whoop... I'll have to drop by her shop when I go climbing at Lincoln Woods.

I get off the boat at 9:30am and see that Google maps shows a place called California Pizza so that becomes destination #1. I may need to revisit before I leave to grab a slice. Destination 2 is the grocery store to pick up food: sliced bread that turns out to not have crusts... what?!, peanut butter, blackberry jam, ruffles, Oreos, an orange fanta, sardines, and two packets of cashews. I start off at 9:43am and decide to reroute to go by the botanical garden. I thought I'd just take a look but once I come by it I realize I have to stop. It's 10:15am. Beautiful garden and what really impressed me were the orchids (even though they aren't endemic to the Açores). Did you know vanilla comes from orchids? And orchids were around with the dinosaurs? And some orchids have these cool mouth shaped pitchers that are used to direct bugs on a specific route to maximize pollination????! Super cool, beautiful and kind of dangerous looking even, I'm reminded of my own carnivorous pitcher plants. I also got to identify some plants I keep seeing around like the Ginger Lily that fills the air with its sweet cloying smell and your sight with its vibrant sun tones (Paulo tells me later it is a nasty invasive species however). The receptionist then served me a "uma chá de hortelã e limão" (mint and lemon tea) and I sit quietly in one of the patios

11am, it's time to get going. Then begins my general trudge up the caldeira although I do pass some lovely passageways of flowers and trees (although they are mostly invasive species I later learn). Generally an uneventful hike up except I saw Alicia on the way up! She awoke me from a reverie I didn't know I was having, leaving me confused for a few seconds as she zoomed by in a pickup truck down the dirt road. The main thoughts of today center around forgiveness. How can we forgive those who have done grievous things in our lives, those of the people we love dearly, and those of people we don't even know. The zigzagging, dusky, blood red, clay roads suck my energy dry until I reach the top. The road begins to flatten as it turns into paved road.

At 2pm I get to the edge of the Caldeira. When you go through the tunnel and the floor falls away to the Caldeira it's magic. I mean I knew the Caldeira was going to be there, but somehow it still surprises you. I mean you don't expect to climb a mountain for hours only to reach the top and see a valley. I traversed along the edge constantly in disbelief. I reach the tallest point and decide it isn't tall enough, I climb up a restricted ladder onto a building and am rewarded for my parkour/climbing skills with a beautiful 360 view. Man climbing comes in handy wowowowow. I walk a little more, pass a few people and stop for lunch at 3pm. At first the howling wind is pleasant, but then it turns cold. Classic wind. I take out my fanta and the first drink is heavenly. I set it down in the grass intent on making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I succeed, wolfing down half of my sandwich only to realize my fanta tipped over and has been running down into the Caldeira... maybe the plants down there will like it? I pack up quickly as the wind is picking up and I am getting a little too cold. It's often unwise to stay on top of a mountain exposed for too long. I finish out the traverse to the last two rectangular prism, stone-marked, points of interest and begin to descend.

It's 3:30pm and I have now gone nearly 12 miles. At first I fear I am doomed to walk a similar road down the volcano as I walked up. But suddenly after a few zigzags I veer off the road and at 4:20pm I begin to follow a small canal, a foot deep and foot wide, replete with running water, intermittent stone walkways and light dappling in through the trees and fauna. Beautiful and so unique. I have never hiked anything like this. At one point the trail takes a turn and becomes a narrow bridge that spans a 60ft drop and I see the ocean to my right. The mud on the sides of the canal start to become a bit annoying as I have managed to keep my shoes dry so far and I aim to keep it that way. But then, suddenly, just as quickly as the road turned into the canal, the canal comes to an end at a beautiful, rectangular, slightly filtered, pool that reflects the trees, sky and sunlight. A little circular building stands on the opposite side of the pool. I pass the pool and then walk up to a Cabeço which at this point I believe means mountain. I almost skip it as the fatigue is starting to set in. But I trudge up, I may never get this opportunity again. I am surprised to see a tunnel and walk through it with my phone flashlight on. It opens and I am suddenly, inexplicably inside of a volcano crater. I am in awe. The fatigue of 15 miles of walking helps to augment the experience. I take a few minutes to take it in, and then I walk out through the tunnel, this time without the flashlight. The wind is rushing straight at me—when I entered I didn't even realize it was at my back; it's true we only notice the headwinds in life. This time as I walk blindly through the tunnel my experience is completely different. Darkness engulfs me and I see the little door of light at the end. I get this weird feeling that I am walking forward, but I am not making any progress. The door of light stays just as far away as my legs mechanically attempt progress. I feel like Christian in Midsömar—reality fades away and I feel unable to process my surroundings. I get this eerie feeling that I am suspended in time and my senses pulse in and out. Suddenly the light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer and reality rushes back and I walk out into the sunlight.

Now it's all downhill for a while. I pop out on a road and take a left walking alongside pastures on a little path between a barbed wire fence and a stone handmade fence. Kind of feels like an anachronism or a thin blade between two different worlds. I get on another road and then I plunge back into the fauna. I scare a little cute black cat and walk through a passageway of ginger lilies, the sweet scent in the air all around me. I start to head up what will be my last uphill for the day. Now I am surrounded by what I can only describe as “moita” or shrubberies (Monty Python shrubberies of course). I crest the top and find myself facing a 360 view of the entire West of the island. I'm overcome. I rejoice and then begin my scamper down, aided by some beautiful wooden hand rails, that then turn into a long downhill staircase of dirt stairs with 3in diameter wooden logs that line the edges. I hit a road and then pass an old laundry/washing building and then get back on a trail. Instead of continuing on the regular trail that goes to the right and the Capelinhos (last site of volcanic activity in the Açores ending in 1958), I continue straight down on my way to Varadouro because it's time to sleep. Hit a road again and stumble into a small town. I stop for a maracujá fanta at a little cafe, then I continue intent to get on a trail I believe is a shortcut. I stop to chat with a guy from Spain in his vacation house and he tells me

the trail is not worth it and has been overgrown, so I head up and then go along the road, feeling like a moving target being narrowly missed by the speeding missiles of cars zooming by me. I come under the impression that there are many Americans here and foreigners. Is this area or Faial in general a beloved place for foreigners to stake their claim to a lovely Azorean home (I learn later that it is also very expensive to live here)? I make it to Varadouro and check in for a tent site at 7:30pm, scared half to death by a woman and her children as she gives me a weird look and a kid scampers in a weird way up to me to say hi. It's really just the failing light and the fact I haven't really seen many people at all today. Maybe only 20 that were hiking and I hiked over 20 miles of trail/roads today. I head down to the oceanside for a vanilla and almond ice cream, a galão, a swim and a shower. Now I'm here back at the camping spot chilling in the cafe writing away on notes on my iphone. I was planning a sardine and bread dinner, but now it's 10:40pm and I am more tired than hungry. Also I realize I only have 15 euros in cash to my name and this matters because it seems I can pay almost nowhere with my cards since they're not Portuguese. Soooo I'll conserve my money. Time for bed. I'll probably wake up early tomorrow and take a light running bag to visit the Capelinhos. I remember the words of my grandparents yesterday: "Don't walk to the Capelinhos, they're way on the other side of the island, you can't walk there, get a taxi or something" Ha, fine I guess I'll jog over.

Took me a while to get up and wasn't in the best mood, not sure why but probably listening to multiple alarms didn't help 🙄. I gear up, wash my socks to leave them to dry, fill my camel back and set off with my trail running gear at 9am to well... trail run! The way to the Capelinhos I was taking, took me along clay dirt roads along the coast. Beautiful but largely uneventful. Suddenly the reddish murky road becomes black and dark and volcanic. I've reached the Capelinhos. I meander up to the lighthouse, eat a quick pb and j, put on my shirt and passing some other tourists, I walk into the museum. The entrance opens to a circular room with a parabolic inverted cone that stretches from the ceiling down to the center of the room coinciding with the crater of faial that lies in the center of the island. Stainless steel quarter inch pegs on the ground shape the perimeter of Faial, I walk on these around the room to buy a ticket to enter the exhibit. I am the first visitor for today. Seems my late awakening paid off as I enter the museum at 10am which happens to be exactly when the exhibit opens today. Lava encordada, bomba volcanica, placa de lava, depósitos de enxofre, cabelos de pele, escorias volcanicas, pedras pomes are all volcanic deposits and formations that I learn to identify. The exhibit is well done, starting with a large collection of minerals and lava stones and some history of the eruption, delineating the 13 months of volcanic activity and the migrations to the US under Kennedy, etc... Then we're swept into a screening room for a large sweep from the beginning of Earth to the Capelinhos. I exit the movie and meander through the rest of the exhibit showing the timeline of rock formation of the Capelinhos and more lava specimens and animations. I finish up and then clamber up the lighthouse which takes my breath away in two ways. I mean I've been hiking quite a bit but 6 flights of stairs still gets me. The second is I'm alone at the top and a quick walk around the top of the lighthouse gives you a 360 view of the Capelinhos and the rest of Faial. I

spiral down and power up the nearby trail to the overlook. Where most people stop to take pictures and then head back down, I continue and find myself alone on another tip of the island nearby. I am rewarded with an unobstructed view of the entire island and the Capelinhos all together. The island stretches before me. I see all that I have traversed and the new mountains that await me today that I skipped yesterday. And the secretive Northern coast of the Capelinhos. At this point I'm not feeling great. I'm feeling the fatigue from the day before and despite my belly being full enough, I can't help feeling a bit light headed and my legs leaden. I jog down the outlook, cross a road and am back on the island ridge. Time to finish what I missed out on yesterday. I wind up to a whalers lookout tower. A small cube building with a 180 degree 1ft tall window opening that looks like it would be more at home in a castle archery tower. I wonder if I should have lunch atop the building, but I know I should be making more progress.

This area used to be home to a whaling town before the volcanic activity of 1958. Azorean whaling was officially outlawed in 1982, but in practice whaling in the Azores did not stop until 1987 [1]. The Azores has large populations of sperm whales, but the humpback and right whales were the most hunted because they were more placid and made easier targets. The first whaling station seems to have been constructed in Horta, Faial in 1832 before spreading to other islands [2]. Tourist whale watching soon replaced whaling as a substantial part of the island economy.

The next mile is a blur as I struggle to find the energy. I hit my first mountain for the day and am surprised to find a cave. I drop my things outside and descend into the darkness armed with only my iPhone flashlight. The silence is instant and deafening as the temperature drops. I can't help but think of some cave monster from Star Wars, something lurking in the darkness. I go in only about 75 ft. The floor keeps dropping farther and farther away and my phone's light seems to be getting weaker and weaker. It's time to head back out. It would not pay to hurt myself or get trapped in this darkness. No one would know. I rejoin the world and continue up. A string of wooden steps rejuvenates my competitive spirit and I try to run up them but falter 30m from the top. I am very tired. I reach the top for a quick victory, take a lap around the top of the crater and then continue and find a large cavernous crater-like opening to my right that stretches down apparently 50m if the sign is anything to go off of. I imagine exploring this without any railings or path. It would be just one slip into a 50m gaping hole. I then head down and then up what I know to be the last big uphill of the trip. My legs just keep moving and suddenly a crater opens up. It's beautiful but by now I've seen many and I continue up, stopping at the next outlook even though it's subpar. I need to refuel or drink water or replenish something because my head is swimming and I have a hard time staying on my feet. Ruffles and pbj go together great by the way, something about salty and sweet. I clamber out of the wilderness to see a family exiting their car. The trail tells me to go right down the mountain but I know the top of the mountain is to the left. So I stupidly go left and go up the mountain but I should have left it alone. The top is littered with man's creations, satellites and power stations and radios with a small crater nestled in the middle. Well I made it. I go back down and am happy with the knowledge that it is all

downhill from here for today. I decide to deviate to hit an atm, because I'm low on money and a coffee and pizza and a veggie burger all sound really good to me right now. I'm walking down a fairly unkempt dirt road with wheat and grasses growing, with pastures surrounding me.

I think I understand the writer's plight. I don't normally feel the need to write or share my experiences, but on these solo trips I feel that need. Last time I did a solo backpacking trip I felt the need to make videos of my journey and put them all together in a YouTube video. I think it's the lack of someone to share my experience with. I think what writer's must feel is that they have some experience or vision of a story that they feel is unique to them. A story that they think is so awesome and cool and they need to share it with the world. And they feel this all the time. Are writers lonely? Do they feel as if they're alone in the world? It may be a lonely job feeling as though you always need to share this truth or story that you yourself can only tell, time ticking away.

I remember I'm about to pass a small church and I think about stopping there to kneel to pray, and it brings me a wash of comfort—however I might negatively feel about the church. There is no denying the comfort that prayer or kneeling in a church, albeit foreign, brings. Offering ourselves up to a higher power can be so liberating. However this is not me, I do not believe and I remember the Bhagavad Gita. In most of this book I found great relief and insight. I need to read back upon this text. I hit the town and this time unlike the others, my spirits are lifted by the road. Finding the church closed I open the nearby spigot and gulp down the cold water town. My spirits by now are quite high. I pick up money, rejoin the main trail, and walk to the Casa Rural Típica. A beautiful little lunch spot with crisscrossing little paths and black stone picnic tables and I call my dad which really serves to lift my spirits. We talk of my hike, middle school renovations back home and the Capelinhos and their historical significance regarding Portuguese immigration to the US. He has to leave to attend to school council things. I reach the town above Varadouro and now it's smooth sailing even though the cafe I meant to drink a galão (coffee with a lot of milk) at, is apparently closed until 4pm. I am resigned to simply walking back to camp. I did this all yesterday and start walking and then running down the blacktop road to Varadouro as the sun suddenly decides to show itself and bearskin upon me. But I hit a groove jogging down. A few girls from the day before that took my picture at the Caldeira pass me in a car saying hi. Day 2 of being recognized. I make it back by 3:30pm. A dip in the pool refreshes the hell out of me. What a beautiful spot. The day at this point is pretty much done. I get a galão, I eat some food, I charge my phone, I get another galão. I try to order what I think is some sweet potato dessert but I receive a batch of potatoes. I've confused doce and doce (portion & sweet). A little 3 year old joins me and I share my fries. He's immediately at ease in my company from the instant he sits down next to me. Why isn't it this easy to make friends now. I'm taken back to a picture of a sculpture at Burning Man of two wireframe adults in distress sitting back to back with little children inside facing each other reaching for each other with their finger tips. Our inner children want to connect. He provides good company as I sip my galão and type my day's

exploits. He leaves and rejoins me with ice cream. Ok I guess I'll get some ice cream too, the magnum with cookies and cream. In retrospect he looks a lot like I did when I was a kid. It's time for bed.

I've been thinking that I think I find these long casual walks pretty refreshing. The time alone and my muscles in pain seems to accelerate a frame of mind and thoughtfulness that I wouldn't otherwise tap into. I think it's the fact I can't merely brush a thought aside and be confused or distracted by my friends or work or the myriad events in my day. Im here, Im alone, Im tired, my breath grows ragged and my only escape are my thoughts. Trapped in the prison of my mind, my thoughts are also my key. Only I can set myself free and all the tools are of my own my making. I hammer out my thoughts and refine them. I chisel through the excess of my overthinking and underthinking. I douse and temper them and distill them into a form I understand. Each and every important thought that is inside is necessary, everything else is an impurity I have cleansed. I run my hands over the finished product. I have the key that will liberate me. I will rest easier tonight. This is good, for tomorrow seems to be a long walk in the rain.

10am museum

I wake up at first ring, it's raining, I mentally get ready for a full day of rain. I put my earphones in and pack my sleeping bag and sleeping pad. Next I methodically shove the disarray of things around me into the backpack leaving room for my tent. I put my shoes on in the tent alcove and then as quickly as possible I proceed to take apart my tent and tent fly, but everything is getting wet. I'm still feeling pretty dry though and by 7:55am all my belongings are on my back (except my butterfly necklace which I think I misplaced at the campsite) on my way back up and out of Varadouro. I'm still listening to music and that was a mistake. It just seems to take me out of the moment. The music stops and my world returns to silence and the constant drum of rain all around me. I keep having the thought that if my mom were to hear this, read this—my inner dialogue while I wander out into a random place for no apparent reason, she'd understand why I do it. When I eventually decide to let her read this later she tells me “You are a special person. Sometimes we need to be alone, but sometimes sharing these moments with someone else brings new meaning too.” It's my escape, my time to figure out my things; to sweat, to struggle, to see beauty. I think maybe I prefer one off things, something that takes a day maybe rather than a backpacking trip to cleanse. More than a day to myself and the fun, the excitement, dulls, trips like these I think can be much more fun with a friend. My mom's words ring true. Enough silence—I put in my airpods, but I don't want spotify. I start to listen to my voice memos.

Something about listening to my guitar playing gratifies me. I have trumpet recordings and voice recordings of me singing, but something about the guitar. I think it's because I take great pride in the playing that a year ago I could not have even imagined. I listen to my recordings over and over again. One of my favorites is Cherry Wine: I sing at home in my bedroom and my mom

comes in to say good morning and listen to my guitar for a bit as I sing the line “Mama don’t fuss over me.” One recording that makes me smile and laugh every time is of someone completely random off of Instagram. She reached out to me about some product or other and assumed my gender to be female on accident. I casually corrected her and then she proceeded to send me an uproariously funny 40 second voice memo apologizing for calling me a woman. Brings me a huge smile every time. Thanks Courtney, that is one of the funniest f****ing things I have ever received. The rain still pours down around me as I listen through all my recordings, choir concerts, a cappella rehearsals, singing practice, trumpet, guitar, lots of guitar.

I turn off the road to head down to Castelo Branco (White Castle) and my feet striking down on the red clay road instantly become fully soaked by verdant wet weeds and growth fighting mightily through the mud and gravel. The wet shoes quickly become a nuisance and I am reminded of “trench feet” in World War II and I am brought back to Mr. Yafai’s class, AP US History Junior year of High School. But I put the thought away and suddenly Castelo Branco rises from the ocean, a little islet bridged to the main island by a small strip of land I can only describe as a steep land bridge. The most prominent wall is immensely impressive, rising out of the ocean, and I can’t help, but imagine the lines zigzagging up, down and diagonal criss crossing across the entire face. The routes to climb seem to come out of the face highlighted like the dazzling blue lines on a Peixe Porco, full with life. It would be amazing to climb this face. I want to scurry up the land bridge to get atop the small islet, but find a prohibited sign. I must respect nature and I know that climbing up this narrow, steep land bridge in the rain alone with a 70m drop straight to the rocks and ocean below is not a good idea (don’t worry mom I try to stay safe, especially when I’m alone).

I head back and take another dirt/slightly paved road back up to the main road. I resolve to stop at the next cafe and change my wet trail ultras for my running sandals. But I reach the next cafe and I feel the need to keep going. I need to make some more progress for the the day, plus I think that maybe running sandals aren’t super appropriate for hiking around with 40 pounds on my back. Boy was I wrong, 1.5 miles later at the next cafe I took off my shoes and traded them for my sandals and it was the best decision I made all day. I had a bifana especial (apparently the especial part just means with cheese) with a galão (I know, classic—coffee is growing on me). I relax at this oceanside cafe for a few minutes enjoying the beauty of the day—the rain has decided to say goodbye and the sun has come up to say hi. It’s midday now and I leave the cafe and the men that have been drinking beers and trading stories at the nearby table. The rest of the walk to Horta is very pleasant. The sandals are great (I should’ve known hiking with them would be fine—I did take them backpacking once in Idaho for 10 miles), the road is flat, I walk along the ocean with the sun and a very light rain trading places, and I continue to listen through voice memos. Time passes quickly and the 4 miles left disappear. I walk along the Praia Pim contemplating getting in, but no one is swimming, the water is murky and I’m starting to think about getting a gin at Peter Sport Cafe. I skip the swim, hike around and up Monte da Guia,

come down the road, hike up another small nearby hill and descend down into the main downtown area. I stop at Peter Sport and get a gin, pão de alho and a sopa de legumes (garlic bread and vegetable soup). I was expecting straight gin, and thinking it had better be damn good gin. But apparently a gin is gin with tonic water, ice, and lemon. It's delicious and since the day has become hot, incredibly refreshing. The garlic bread has been baked beautifully and ends up having a cheesy buttery topping as well, and goes beautifully with the blended and creamy sopa de legumes. I eat it all up. My phone battery is almost out so I stop at a cafe to charge my phone and then head to a small beach near the port, Praia de Conceção. I spend some time going through all my belongings trying to find my butterfly necklace, but realize it is gone. I resign myself and go take a swim. The water here is always refreshing. Time to get on the boat.

Beautiful ferry back. My backpacking for this trip is over. The sun is leaving and the clouds are everywhere outlining the island of Faial as we zoom away. Cagarros I think circle the boat and follow along for the ride. I eat a sweet bread I bought earlier as my hands rest on the back railing and the wind rushes all around me. This is the life. I reach the port 20 minutes earlier than I told Paulo, my cousin, I'd be there, but the instant I pop out he's there and brushes me into the small van. We soon settle into a system where we get to practice both English and Portuguese. He speaks in English and I speak back in Portuguese. It's hard to tell who's better at the other's language. They take me in with open arms and I am kept full and active the entire time. I play soccer and a type of tennis-like paddle game with a smaller court, higher net and smaller, denser ball. I'm struck by my ten year-old cousin's maturity. He wants to be a politician and tells me of Portugal's poor standing in the world and the problems that lie here. In many ways he's still a kid, but I know I didn't have a sense of the world like he does at ten years old. People grow up faster around here it seems. The next day I wake up at 7:20am and we go "para vindimar," to pick grapes at their plot that lies in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The grapes here lie on the volcanic ground ensconced by a maze of 4ft rock walls painstakingly built to protect the grapes from the strong ocean winds. Paulo paid five thousand euros per 1000 meters squared for 2300 meters squared (a deal acquired by being good friends with an old timer who had just passed). Paulo tells me we get 1.85 euros per kilo of grapes and this year we manage about 170 kilos. It's clear this is not a lucrative business, but the worth of this plot to Paulo is worth infinitely more than any material gain. Paulo tells me that he's spent many, many hours here fixing the stone walls, weeding, planting, ruminating and most strikingly, crying. It reminds me that it is okay to still be uncertain in this world, to still fail and to still shed tears. This is his place of escape and power and emotion.

We spend half the day picking the Azorinto de Açores white grapes. The grapes that grow the best tend to be the nearest to the ground and most protected. I wonder if I can glean some kind of truth or lesson from these Azorean grapes. In any case, this year proves to yield 30% less grapes than the last—which was already a poor year. It seems climate change is truly making it more difficult everywhere—fires ravage the Tahoe area in California back home and a hurricane just

passed by Boston back where I go to school. I leave Paulo's house the next morning after a devastating covid test—I don't think anyone likes getting a cotton stick shoved up to their brain. The next days before I leave back to Boston are marked by diving into the ocean off the port as much as possible, a delicious polvo "octopus" dinner, cocktails and fried shrimp at a cousin's house, trail running, and a spur of the moment fast-paced ride in the night to get drinks and chocolate croissants and pão de choriço. Time to go home.

[1] <https://www.itinari.com/whaling-tradition-of-the-azores-lfet>

[2] Azorean Whaling, Richard Ellis